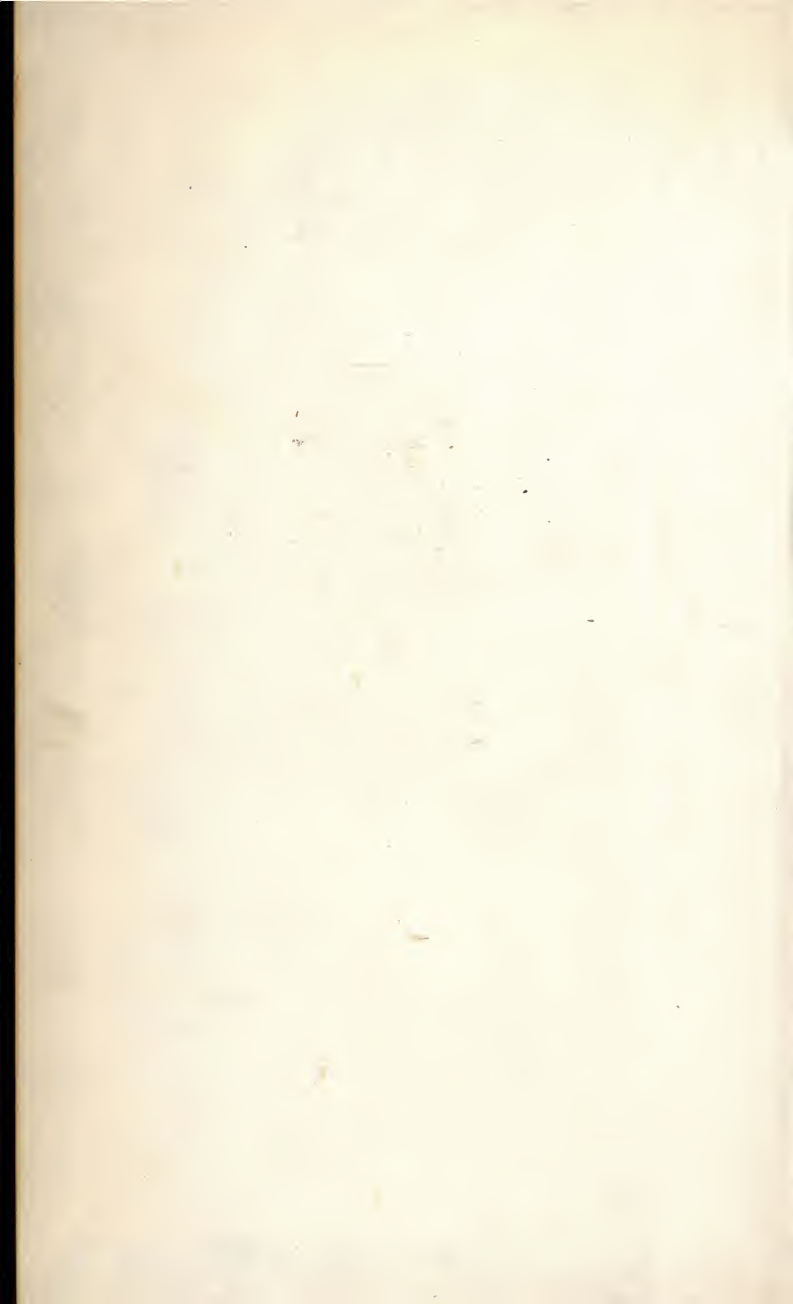


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CAPTAIN HATTERAS;

OR, THE

ENGLISH AT THE NORTH POLE.



The Forward coming to her moorings.

Frontispiece.

Captain Hatteras.

CAPTAIN HATTERAS;

OR,

The English at the North Pole.

BY

JULES VERNE,

AUTHOR OF "FIVE WEEKS IN A BALLOON," "DESERT OF ICE," ETC., ETC.

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CONTENTS.

OF THE

	CHAPTER I.	PAGE
The Forward	- - - - -	1
	CHAPTER II.	
An Unexpected Letter	- - - - -	2
	CHAPTER III.	
Doctor Clawbonny	- - - - -	10
	CHAPTER IV.	
Captain Dog	- - - - -	17
	CHAPTER V.	
At Sea	- - - - -	23
	CHAPTER VI.	
The Great Polar Current	- - - - -	29
	CHAPTER VII.	
Davis' Straits	- - - - -	34
	CHAPTER VIII.	
What the Crew had to Say about it	- - - - -	40
	CHAPTER IX.	
News	- - - - -	40

	PAGE
CHAPTER X.	
Perilous Navigation	51
CHAPTER XI.	
The Devil's Thumb	57
CHAPTER XII.	
Captain Hatteras	64
CHAPTER XIII.	
The Projects of Hatteras	71
CHAPTER XIV.	
Expedition in Search of Franklin	76
CHAPTER XV.	
Driven Southward	82
CHAPTER XVI.	
The Magnetic Pole	87
CHAPTER XVII.	
The Catastrophe of Sir John Franklin	92
CHAPTER XVIII.	
The Northern Route	98
CHAPTER XIX.	
A Whale in Sight	102
CHAPTER XX.	
Beechey Island	107
CHAPTER XXI.	
Bellot's Death	113

	PAGE
CHAPTER XXII.	
The Beginning of the Mutiny - - - - -	119
CHAPTER XXIII.	
The Attack of the Icebergs - - - - -	124
CHAPTER XXIV.	
Preparations for Wintering - - - - -	130
CHAPTER XXV.	
One of Sir James Ross's Old Foxes - - - - -	135
CHAPTER XXVI.	
The Last Morsel of Coal - - - - -	141
CHAPTER XXVII.	
The Great Cold at Christmas - - - - -	145
CHAPTER XXVIII.	
Preparations for Departure - - - - -	151
CHAPTER XXIX.	
Across the Ice Fields - - - - -	155
CHAPTER XXX.	
The Cairn - - - - -	162
CHAPTER XXXI.	
The Death of Simpson - - - - -	167
CHAPTER XXXII.	
The Return to the Forward - - - - -	171



CAPTAIN HATTERAS;

OR,

THE ENGLISH AT THE NORTH POLE.

CHAPTER I.

THE FORWARD.

THE brig *Forward*, captain K. Z.; Richard Shandon, mate, will leave New Prince's Dock to-morrow with the first of the ebb—destination unknown."

This was a notice in the *Liverpool Herald*, of the 5th of April, 1866.

The departure of a brig is a very unimportant event for the most commercial port in England. Who would notice it among vessels of all sizes and all nationalities, which its six square miles of water hardly suffice to float?

Nevertheless, early in the morning of the 6th of April a considerable number of persons crowded the quay of the dock; all the sailors in the city seemed to have agreed to meet there. The labourers at the adjoining wharfs had left their work; merchants had quitted their gloomy offices, and shopkeepers their empty shops. The gaudily-painted omnibuses, which run along the out-

side of the dock basin, discharged their loads of curious visitors every few minutes; and the business of the whole city seemed for the moment to consist in the departure of the *Forward* brig.

The *Forward* was a brig-rigged screw steamer of one hundred and seventy tons, and one hundred and twenty horse-power. It might easily have been taken for any other brig in the dock. But if to the casual observer it offered nothing extraordinary, judges saw certain peculiarities in her which to a sailor were unmistakable.

A crowd of sailors on board the *Nautilus*, which lay close to her, were speculating on the destination of the *Forward*.

"What do you think of her spars?" said one. "Steamers don't usually carry so much canvas."

"That vessel," said a burly, red-faced boatswain, "depends as much on her sails as her steam; and as her topmasts and topgallant-masts are so lofty, you may be sure it is because her lower sails will often be becalmed. To me it seems a certainty that the *Forward's* destination is the Arctic or Antarctic seas, where icebergs too often keep the wind out of a good ship's sails."

"Right you are, Master Cornhill," replied a third sailor. "Have you noticed what a straight stem she has?"

"Besides," added Cornhill, "she has a cast-steel blade fixed to it, capable of cutting down a three-decker if the *Forward* was to run into her at full speed ahead."

"That brig," observed a Mersey pilot, "ought to steam fourteen knots an hour. It was wonderful to see how well she went on her trial trip. Believe me, she is very fast."

"And not very slow under sail either," remarked Cornhill. "She goes pretty close to the wind, and steers easily. You may be as sure as I am my name is Cornhill, that vessel is going to make an attempt at the North-West Passage. Do you notice how large the port is for her rudder post to go through?"

"True," said one of the speakers; "what does that prove?"

"That proves, my boys," replied the boatswain, disdainfully, "that you can neither see nor think; that proves that they have left plenty of room for the rudder that it may be easily unshipped if necessary. You must know that when surrounded by ice that is frequently done."

"Right again," chimed in the sailors on board the *Nautilus*.

"And moreover," said one of them, "the brig's cargo confirms Cornhill's opinion. I have it from Clifton, who is going in her. The *Forward* carries stores and provisions for five or six years, and as much coal as she can stow. That is her whole cargo, together with a supply of warm clothing in wool and sealskin."

"Well," observed Cornhill, "there can be no doubt of it now. But, my friend, since you know Clifton, tell us, has he said nothing to you about where he was bound?"

"He could tell me nothing, for he knew nothing; the crew was shipped on those terms. Where he is bound to? he will hardly know it before he is there."

"And suppose they all go to the devil together, as seems very probable?" said one of the unbelievers.

"But how they are paid!" replied Clifton's friend with animation; "what wages! five times more than regular pay! Without that, Richard Shandon would, under these circumstances, have had some trouble to find a crew. A strange-built vessel like that going no one knows where, and which looks as if she was never coming back again. For my part I would rather have had nothing to do with her."

"Whether you would have liked it or not," replied Master Cornhill, "you would never have been one of the crew of the *Forward*."

"Why not?"

"Because you would not have passed their examination. I made inquiries, and was told that married men were not accepted. Now, you belong to that great and numerous class, so you need not look so nice about it."

The sailor addressed began to laugh with his comrades, while Cornhill continued—

"That vessel has a name, too, which is a bold one, to say the least of it—the *Forward*. Forward where to? Besides, she is not known to have a captain at all."

"Yes, she is," said a young, fresh-looking sailor.

"How do you know she has?"

"Because there is no doubt about it."

"My lad," said Cornhill, "do you believe that Shandon himself is the *Forward's* captain?"

"But," began the sailor.

"I tell you Shandon is only second in command, and nothing more. He is a bold and gallant seaman, who has shown what he can do, but captain he is not; he is no more captain than you or I. And as to who may really be captain, he knows no more than we do. When the proper time comes the real captain will make his appearance from some shore of this world or the new, for Richard Shandon has not told any one whither he is going to direct his vessel's course, nor has he permission to do so."

"But I assure you, Master Cornhill," insisted the sailor-boy, "I assure you there is some one on board, mentioned in the letter when the mate's berth was offered to Mr. Shandon."

"What!" cried Cornhill, with a groan; "do you mean to tell me the *Forward's* captain is already on board?"

"Yes, I do."

"You tell that to me?"

"To be sure I do, for I had it from Johnson, the boatswain," said the young sailor.

"From Johnson, the boatswain?"

"Certainly; he told me so himself."

"Johnson told you so?"

"He not only told me so, but he pointed the captain out to me."

"Did he show him to you?" asked Cornhill, in profound astonishment.

"Yes."

"And you saw him?"

"With my own eyes."

"And what is he like?"

"It's a dog."

"A dog! with four paws?"

"Yes."

Great was the astonishment among the sailors of the *Nautilus*. Under any other circumstances they would have burst out laughing. A dog the captain of a brig of a hundred and seventy tons. It was too startling. But, in fact, the *Forward* was such a strange vessel that one hesitated to laugh at her, or even to deny whatever was said of her, extravagant as it might be. Besides, Cornhill did not laugh at all.

"So it was Johnson who pointed out this new sort of captain—this dog, in fact—to you, was it?" he resumed, addressing the young sailor; "and you saw him?"

"As plainly as I see you."

"Well, what do you think of that?" asked the seamen of Cornhill.

"I don't know what to think, I don't think about it at all; the *Forward* may be the devil's ship for aught I know, with a crew of lunatics only fit for Bedlam."

The seamen continued gazing silently at the *Forward*, whose preparations for leaving the dock were nearly concluded; and not one of them even hinted that Johnson, the boatswain, had been joking the sailor-boy.

This story of the dog was current in town already, and many a curious eye was looking for the dog-captain, which they were inclined to take for a supernatural animal.

The *Forward* had attracted public attention for several months; a certain amount of strangeness in her build, the mystery which surrounded her, her captain's incognito, the manner in which Shandon accepted the office to superintend her fitting out, the care with which her crew had been chosen, the port, as yet unknown or hardly suspected by a few, everything contributed to increase the veil of mystery which enveloped the brig.

To a man capable of thinking and reflecting there are few more moving spectacles than a vessel about to set out on her voyage; the imagination accompanies her in her struggles with the sea and winds; in her adventurous course which does not always end with her

arrival in port; and should any unusual incident occur, the vessel excites a romantic degree of interest even to minds little used to give way to fancy.

Such was the case with the *Forward*; and if the bulk of the spectators were not qualified to make the sage observations of Master Cornhill, enough reports had accumulated during the last three months to afford ample matter of conversation for all Liverpool.

The brig had been built in a yard at Birkenhead, which is now only a Liverpool suburb, on the left shore of the Mersey, and having its communication with Liverpool kept up by innumerable steamers and steam ferries.

Scott and Co., the builders, a very well-known firm, had received a very detailed plan and lines for building the brig from Shandon, in which her dimensions and carrying power had been defined most accurately—they could see it was the work of a consummate seaman. Shandon having a considerable sum of money at his disposal, the vessel was put in hand immediately, and, in accordance with the wish of its unknown owner, its construction was rapidly carried on.

The brig was built in the strongest manner possible, to resist enormous pressure, for her frame was of teak and iron. It was a question among seafaring people why she was not built of iron plates altogether, like other steam vessels? The reply to which was that the unknown engineer had his own reasons for building her thus.

Little by little the brig began to rise on the slip, and the strength and fineness of her lines attracted the attention of judges. As the men on board the *Nautilus* had remarked, her stem was quite at right angles with her keel, it was fitted not with a spur but with a cutting edge of cast steel, from R. Hawthorn's foundry at Newcastle; this metal, from glittering in the sun, gave the brig a peculiar look, though there was nothing of offensive warfare in it; one sixteen pounder pivot gun, however, had been mounted on her forecastle, but neither that nor the stem gave the vessel a very warlike appearance.

On the 5th of February, 1860, this strange vessel was successfully launched amidst an immense concourse of spectators. But if the brig was neither a man-of-war, nor a trading vessel, nor a pleasure yacht—for people do not go yachting generally with six years' stores on board—what was she? Was she a vessel destined to the search after the *Erebus* and the *Terror*, and also after Sir John Franklin? No; for in 1859, the year preceding, Captain McClintock had returned from the Arctic seas bringing with him certain proof of the loss of that unfortunate expedition.

Was it the intention of the *Forward* to look for the North-west Passage? To what purpose? Captain McClure had discovered it in 1853, and his lieutenant, Mr. Cresswell, had the honour of being the first to round the American continent from Behring's to Davis Straits.

Well, it was certain to some minds that the *Forward* was preparing to venture into the region of ice. Would she attempt to reach the southern pole, further than the whaler Captain Wedell, or Captain James Ross, had gone? To what purpose, or for what object?

It is thus easily concluded that, though the field of conjecture was narrowed considerably, imagination still succeeded in losing itself. The day after the launch of the brig, its engine arrived from Hawthorn's works at Newcastle. This engine was of one hundred and twenty horse-power nominal, with oscillating cylinders, taking up little room. Its power was considerable for a vessel of one hundred and seventy tons, setting a large amount of canvas, and which was very fast. Her trial trips had left no doubt on that point, and even Johnson, the boatswain, had thus given his opinion of her to Clifton's friend in the following terms—

"When the *Forward* uses both screw and sails, she goes faster under sail."

Clifton's friend was unable to understand this distinction, but he thought everything was to be expected from a vessel commanded by a dog in person.

As soon as the engine was fitted on board, they began stowing the provisions, which was no trifling affair, for the brig was to carry stores for six years; salted and dried meat, smoked fish, biscuits and flour, mountains of tea and coffee, were sent down the shcots in heaps. Richard Shandon superintended the stowing away of this precious cargo like a man who understood his business; everything was numbered and ticketed in the most perfect order; a great quantity of that Indian preparation, pemmican, was also provided, as it contains a great deal of nutrition in small volume.

The nature of these stores left no longer any doubt as to the length of the cruise, but an acute observer would have instantly guessed the *Forward's* destination was the Arctic seas, at the sight of the barrels of lime juice, packets of mustard, sorrel and scurvy grass seeds—in a word, by an abundance of antiscorbutics, which are so necessary in northern navigation. Shandon had no doubt received especial directions to attend to this part of his cargo, for he attended to it particularly, as well as to the ship's medicine chest.

If the arms on board were not very many, the magazine was full. The solitary fore-castle gun could not possibly require such a supply of ammunition. This gave cause for reflection. There were also gigantic saws and powerful machines, such as levers, masses of lead, hand saws, enormous hatchets, &c., without reckoning a quantity of blasting cylinders, capable of blowing up the Liverpool Custom-House. All this was very strange, if not terrible, without mentioning rockets, signals, and fireworks, and lights of every description.

The numerous spectators along the quay had also the oppor-

tunity of admiring a long mahogany whaleboat, a canoe of iron, covered with gutta percha, and a certain number of halkett boats, a sort of India-rubber cloak, capable of being inflated into a boat. Every one seemed more or less at a loss, and even excited, for, with the fall of the tide, the *Forward* was to leave her moorings for her mysterious destination.





CHAPTER II.

AN UNEXPECTED LETTER.

THIS is the text of the letter received by Richard Shandon eight months before:—

“Aberdeen, August 2, 1859.

“Mr. Richard Shandon.

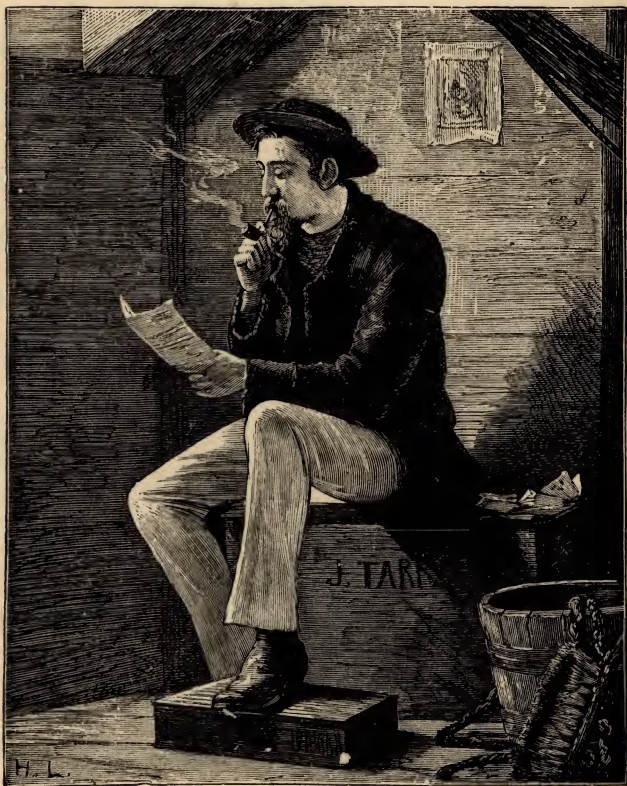
“SIR,—This present is to advise you that the sum of sixteen thousand pounds has been paid into the house of Marcuart and Co., bankers, at Liverpool. I enclose a series of orders which will enable you to draw the above-mentioned sixteen thousand pounds from Messrs. Marcuart and Co. You are unacquainted with me, which is of no importance. I know you, and that is very much so.

“I offer you the situation of mate on board the brig *Forward* on a voyage which may be both long and perilous.

“If you do not accept there is no harm done; if you do, you shall receive pay at the rate of five hundred a year, and, at the expiration of each year, as long as the cruise lasts, an increase of ten per cent. on your pay.

“The brig *Forward* is not yet in existence. You must have her built and ready for launching by the first week in April, 1860, at latest. I enclose a plan and lines for her, which must be most exactly followed. Scott and Co. are to build her, and you must make arrangements with them accordingly.

“I advise you to be especially careful in selecting the *Forward's* crew; it will consist of myself captain, you first mate, a third officer, a boatswain, two engineers, an ice master, eight sailors, and two stokers, eighteen in all, including Dr. Clawbonny of this place, who will present himself to you at a fitting time. It is necessary.



Shandon receiving the first letter from K. Z.

Captain Hatteras.



that the men composing the *Forward's* crew should be English, free, unmarried, sober, for the use of spirits, and even of beer, will not be allowed on board, ready to undertake anything and to endure anything. You must take those in preference who are of a sanguine complexion, and containing in themselves the power of generating animal heat in a greater degree. You will offer them five times the amount of wages they earn in general, increased by one-tenth after each year's service. At the end of the cruise each man will have the sum of five hundred pounds handed over to him, and you will also receive two thousand pounds. Funds to this amount will be paid into the Messrs. Marcuart's bank.

"The cruise may be long and toilsome, but it will be honourable. Therefore, Mr. Shandon, there can be no hesitation on your part. Write in reply to the initials, 'K. Z. *Poste Restante*, Gotteborg, Sweden.'

"P.S.—On the 15th of February you will receive a large Danish dog with pendulous lips, of a dark tawny colour, with black brindled stripes. You must take it on board and feed it on barley bread and greaves. You must send me word at Leghorn when the dog arrives.

"The Captain of the *Forward* will be on board and make himself known at the proper time. At the moment of leaving you will receive fresh instructions.

"The Captain of the *Forward*,

"K. Z."





CHAPTER III.

DOCTOR CLAWBONNY.

RICHARD SHANDON was a good seaman; he had been master of whalers in the Arctic seas for some years, and had a well-established reputation. Such a letter might well surprise him; and surprised he accordingly was, but with the coolness of a man who has experienced similar surprises before.

He, too, could fulfil all the conditions stipulated for; no wife, no children, no relations. Could a man be free, that was he. So, having to ask advice of no one, he went straight to the bankers, Messrs. Marcuart and Co.

"If the money is really there, the rest is easy enough," said he to himself.

He was received at the bank with the attention due to a man who has there a balance of sixteen thousand pounds; once satisfied on that score, Shandon asked for a sheet of paper, and in a bold, sailor-like style of writing, sent his acceptance of the offer to the address given him.

The same day he was in communication with the builders at Birkenhead, and in twenty-four hours the keel of the *Forward* was already laid down on the slip.

Shandon was a man of forty, robust, energetic, and brave, three necessary qualities for a seaman, for they give him confidence, vigour, and coolness. He was said to be jealous and hard, and for that reason was more feared than loved by his men. But this reputation gave him no difficulty in getting a crew, for he was known to be a thorough good seaman.

Shandon was rather afraid that the mysterious part of the affair would in some degree be a hindrance to his movements.

"So," said he, "the best way is to hold one's tongue; some of these sea dogs will want to know the why and the wherefore of the

affair, and as I know nothing myself, I shall be terribly bothered what to tell them. The 'K. Z.' must be a queer customer; but, after all, he leaves everything to me, he knows me, and that's enough. As for his vessel, she shall be turned out properly, and my name is not Richard Shandon if she is not intended for a cruise in the icy seas. But I must keep that to myself and the other officers."

And Shandon set to work to get his crew together, strictly adhering to the regulations respecting family ties and health, laid down by the captain.

He had an acquaintance named James Wall, a good fellow, and a first-rate seaman. Wall might be about thirty, and had made more than one voyage in the Northern seas.

Shandon offered him the third officer's berth, and Wall accepted it at once; all he wanted was a cruise somewhere. Shandon told him the whole story, as he also did to a man named Johnson, whom he engaged as boatswain.

"Well," said James Wall, "that is as good as anything else. If it be to find the North-west Passage, there are many who come back again."

"Not always," replied Johnson; "but that is no reason for not going."

"Besides, if we are not mistaken in our conjectures," resumed Shandon, "it must be confessed the voyage will be undertaken under favourable circumstances. The *Forward* is a fine vessel, and will have a good engine in her; she must go far. Eighteen men all told are quite enough for a crew."

"Eighteen hands," replied Johnson, "are all that Kane, the American, had with him when he put his vessel's head to the North Pole."

"It is a strange thing," said Wall, "that any private individual should be found to attempt to cross Davis' Straits to Behring's Straits. The expeditions sent out to look for Franklin have already cost the country more than seven hundred and sixty thousand pounds, without any practical result. How is it any one can be found to risk his fortune in such an undertaking?"

"In the first place we are arguing on a simple hypothesis," returned Shandon. "Whether we are going north or south I really cannot say. It may be a question of attempting some new discovery. And some day or other a certain Doctor Clawbonny will make his appearance on board, who no doubt knows all about it, and it will be his business to inform us. We shall soon see."

"We had better wait patiently, then," said Johnson; "for my part I am going to try and pick up some likely lads, and as for their capacity for generating animal heat, as the captain says, I promise you that beforehand. You may trust me for it."

Johnson was a valuable man; he was well-acquainted with navigation in the higher latitudes. He had been quarter-master on board

the *Phœnix*, which made part of the expeditions sent out in 1853 to look for Franklin; he had witnessed the death of the French lieutenant, Bellot, who perished in crossing the ice. Johnson knew the whole seafaring population of Liverpool, and immediately began to look for men.

Shandon, Wall, and he had done so well that by the first week in December their crew was complete; but not without some difficulty; many were attracted by the high rate of wages, but were frightened at the chances of never coming back, and more than one who had signed articles came back, and returned the advance he had received, having been dissuaded by his friends from joining such an undertaking. Besides every man wanted to penetrate the mystery which surrounded the ship and her officers, and were always pressing Richard Shandon, the chief officer, with questions, who referred them to Johnson, the boatswain, for an answer.

"What do you want me to tell you, my friend?" was the latter's invariable reply. "I know no more about it than you do. Anyhow, you will be in good company with fellows afraid of nothing; and that is something, after all; so you need not be so long thinking it over; you can take it or leave it," and most of them took it.

"You can easily see," the boatswain used sometimes to add, "that I have only to choose. Such pay as no sailor ever heard of before, and the certainty of finding a handsome sum laid by for you when you come back; there is something to tickle your fancy."

"No doubt," the man would say, "that's a great temptation. No more work to the end of one's days."

"I do not disguise from you," Johnson went on, "the cruise will be a long one, maybe a painful and a dangerous one; that is so set down in our instructions; therefore you must make up your minds to what you have to expect before you sign articles, it is very probable, to attempt all that man can do, and perhaps more! So if you don't feel your heart big enough, and courage to face anything, and cannot make up your mind to the fact that there are twenty chances to one you may stay out there altogether; if you would rather die in one place than another, rather here than there, then get out of the way, and make room for a bolder fellow."

"But at all events, Master Johnson," the sailor would say to gain time for reflection, "you know what sort of a man the skipper is, don't you?"

"Richard Shandon, my man, is your skipper till another comes."

Now, that was really that officer's idea, and he secretly believed such would be the case, and that at the last moment he would receive his instructions as to the object of the voyage, and that he would remain in command of the *Forward*. He felt a sort of satisfaction in encouraging that opinion, when talking to the other officers, or in watching the progress of the brig, which now began to show her frame-work above the slip at Birkenhead, like the ribs of a whale on its back.

Shandon and Johnson had been very scrupulous with regard to the health of all the hands they engaged, and they all looked capable of heating the *Forward's* boilers with their own animal heat; their limbs were elastic, their complexions clear and hearty, and they looked capable of offering a successful resistance to intense cold. They were not all equally hearty; in fact, Shandon had hesitated before engaging some of them, such as the foremost men, Gripper and Garry, and Simpson the harpooner, who seemed to him to be rather spare, but their build was good and their hearts warm, and so they were allowed to sign articles. The whole crew were Protestants; on a long, dreary cruise; prayer, in common, and reading the Bible would often bring men's minds together, and raise their spirits in the hour of discouragement; it was, therefore, advisable that there should be no difference to be raised among them on religious points. Shandon was well aware of the utility of these practices, and of their influences on the moral character of a crew, from past experience; they are generally encouraged on board all vessels which pass the winter in the polar seas.

Having manned his vessel, Shandon and his two subordinates set to work to victual her; they followed their captain's directions to the letter, in which the quality and quantity of every article were stated. The bills with which the chief officer was furnished enabled him to pay ready money, and so obtain a discount of eight per cent., which Shandon carried to the account of K. Z.

Crew, provisions and cargo were all ready in January, 1860; the *Forward* was then making great progress. Shandon went over to Birkenhead every day.

The 23rd of January, according to custom, he was standing on the steam ferry-boat, crossing the Mersey; the fog was so thick that the steersman of the steamboat was obliged to have recourse to his compass, though the passage across hardly ever exceeds ten minutes. Thick, however, as was the fog, it could not prevent Shandon seeing a short stout man, with an intelligent good-humoured face, and pleasant expression, who walked up to him, took both his hands in his own, and shook them "with quite the fervour and familiarity of a Southerner,"—as a Frenchman would have said.

But if this individual was no Southerner he was not far from it; he talked and gesticulated in the most voluble manner; he was obliged to give his thoughts utterance or the machine would have burst. His eyes were small, like those of most clever men; his mouth, large and expressive, was the safety-valve which allowed his overflowing thought to escape; he talked, and talked so much and so freely, that it must be confessed Shandon was at a loss to understand him.

The mate of the *Forward* was not long in recognizing this little man, though he had never seen him; light crossed his mind, and when the other was obliged to stop for breath, Shandon just slipped out these words:

"Doctor Clawbonny?"

"Himself, in person, Mr. Shandon! I have been looking for you for a quarter of an hour everywhere—only fancy my impatience; in another five minutes I should have lost my head! It is you, then, Mr. Shandon, who are chief officer; you really do exist? You are no myth? Your hand, your hand, if you please; let me shake it once more? Yes, this is indeed Richard Shandon's hand! There is really a chief officer of that name; there is a brig called the *Forward*, which he is now commanding; if he commands her she will sail, and if she sails it will be with Doctor Clawbonny on board.

"That is very good logic," continued the doctor, after drawing a deep breath, "and therefore you see me in very good spirits; my dearest wish is fulfilled. I have been for a long time hoping for such a chance as this, to undertake such a voyage. Now with you, captain—"

"Allow me—" Shandon began.

"With you," Clawbonny went on without hearing him, "we are sure to go far and not turn back for any obstacle."

"But—" Shandon began again.

"For you have shown what you can do, captain. I know how your time of service has been spent. You are a downright good seaman."

"If you would only allow me—"

"No, I will not allow your boldness, resolution, and skill to be questioned for a moment, even by yourself. The captain who has chosen you for his second in command is a man who knows what he is about, I can answer for it."

"But that is not the point in question," said Shandon, impatiently.

"What is it, then? Don't keep me in suspense."

"If you would only let me speak! Tell me, doctor, if you please, how do you come to take a part in the *Forward's* expedition?"

"Why, in consequence of a letter, a letter from a worthy captain, very laconic, and very much to the point." And so saying the doctor handed to Shandon the following letter.

"Inverness, January 22nd, 1860.

"To Doctor Clawbonny, Liverpool.

"If Doctor Clawbonny wishes to join the *Forward* for a long cruise, he can present himself to her commander, Richard Shandon, who has received instructions regarding him.

"The Captain of the *Forward*,

"K. Z."

"The letter reached me this morning, and here I am, ready to go on board the *Forward* at once."

"But, doctor, I suppose you know the object of this voyage?"

"Not I, the least in the world! But what matters it, provided I only go somewhere. They call me a *savant*; they are very much mistaken, captain. I know nothing, and if I have published a books which have had a ready sale I was wrong to do so; the public was good to buy them! I repeat I know nothing, but that I am really an ignorant man. Now, I have the offer of finishing or rather beginning again my studies in medicine, surgery, history, geography, botany, mineralogy, conchology, chemistry, physics, mechanics and hydrography; well, I accept such an offer, as you may suppose, without much pressing."

"Then," said Shandon, in a tone of disappointment, "you don't know where the *Forward* is bound after all?"

"Yes, captain; it is bound where there is anything to learn, or discover, or compare, where other customs and other countries are to be met with, other peoples in the exercise of their habits of life to study; it is going, in fact, where I have never been."

"But where in particular?" cried Shandon.

"In particular, I have heard it said, to the Northern Seas."

"Of course," said Shandon, "you know the captain?"

"Not the least! But he must be a fine fellow, you may be sure of that."

The doctor and Shandon having landed at Birkenhead, the latter soon explained matters to the former, whose imagination was of course greatly inflamed by the mystery which shrouded the expedition. The sight of the brig threw him into a transport of joy. From that day forward he never left Shandon's side, and went every morning over to Birkenhead to watch the progress making in the *Forward's* hull.

He had also to attend to the shipment of the medical stores, for Clawbonny was a doctor of medicine, and a very good doctor too, though he had seen but little practice. At twenty-five he had taken his doctor's degree; at forty he was a learned man in the true sense of the term; being well-known to the whole town, he became an influential member of the Literary and Philosophic Society of Liverpool.

His fortune, though small, enabled him to give advice not the less valuable that it cost nothing; liked, as every amiable man deserves, he never did any harm to any one, not even to himself. Lively and talkative, it is true, but with his heart in his hand and his hand at the service of every one.

When it was known in the town he had engaged on board the *Forward*, his friends did all they could to dissuade him, which only made him the more resolved to go; and when the doctor had once made up his mind, he would be a clever man who could prevail upon him to change.

From that day forward conjectures and apprehensions went on increasing, which did not prevent the launch of the brig on the 5th

of February, 1860. Two months afterwards she was ready for sea.

On the 15th of March, as the captain's letter had announced, a Danish dog was sent by rail from Edinburgh to Liverpool, addressed to Richard Shandon. The animal seemed sulky and shy, with a strange look in his eyes. The word, *Forward*, was engraved on his brass collar. The captain took him on board at once, and wrote to Leghorn to the initials specified, to say he had arrived.

Thus, excepting the captain, the *Forward's* crew was complete. It was composed as follows.

1. K. Z., captain; 2. Richard Shandon, chief officer; 3. James Wall, third officer; 4. Doctor Clawbonny; 5. Johnson, boatswain; 6. Simpson, harpooner; 7. Bell, carpenter; 8. Brunton, chief engineer; 9. Plover, second engineer; 10. Strong, (a negro) cook; 11. Foker, ice-master; 12. Wolsten, armourer; 13. Bolton, sailor; 14. Garry, sailor; 15. Clifton, sailor; 16. Gripper, sailor; 17. Pen, sailor; 18. Warren, stoker.





CHAPTER IV.

CAPTAIN DOG.

THE day of departure was fixed for the 5th of April. The doctor having joined the ship had given more confidence to the crew. Where the worthy man went they could follow. Still the majority of the crew were uneasy, and Shandon, fearing some of them might desert at the last moment, was anxious to be at sea; once out of sight of land the crew then must make up their minds.

Doctor Clawbonny's cabin was situated at the end of the poop, and took up all the afterpart of the vessel. The cabins of the captain and the second in command looked upon deck. The captain's was kept closed, after having been fitted with various instruments, furniture, clothing, books and utensils, according to a list sent to Shandon. According to the unknown captain's directions the key of the cabin had been sent to him at Lubeck. He alone, therefore, could go into the cabin.

This circumstance annoyed Shandon excessively, and diminished his chance of the chief command. His own cabin was perfectly fitted to meet the requirements of such a voyage as he presumed it would turn out to be, as he was well acquainted with all that was required for a polar expedition.

The third officer's cabin was on the lower deck, which formed a large dormitory for the men, and they would have been troubled to find such comfortable quarters on board any other vessel.

They were cared for as the most valuable part of the cargo. A large stove was in the middle of the deck.

Doctor Clawbonny was quite at home; he had taken possession of his cabin on the 6th of February, the day after the *Forward* was launched.

"The happiest animal in the world," he used to say, "is a snail when he has a shell which fits him completely. I intend to be an intelligent snail."

And for a shell which he did not intend to leave for a long time, his cabin began to look extremely comfortable. The doctor began to amuse himself like a child, putting his scientific baggage in order—his books, his herbals, his cases, and all his scientific instruments of every possible description were arranged with a method which would have put the British Museum to shame.

"My house is small," he used to say, when it was filled with a constant influx of visitors, "but I do wish it was not so full of my friends."

To complete the description of the *Forward*, it only remains to say that the Danish dog's kennel had been placed under the window of the mysterious cabin; but its savage inhabitant preferred wandering about the lower deck and hold of the vessel; it seemed impossible to make friends with him, and no one had been able to make him follow or come when called; he howled all night in the most doleful way. Was it because he missed his master, or an instinctive foreknowledge of the dangers of the voyage? The men declared it was for that reason, and more than one joked about it, who really believed the dog was some diabolical incarnation.

Pen, a surly sort of fellow, on one occasion aiming a blow at him, fell against the capstan and cut his head severely. This accident was of course laid to the account of this charmed animal.

Clifton, the most superstitious of the whole crew, made the singular remark that when the dog was on the poop, he always kept to windward, and when the brig was at sea the beast always went over to windward every time the vessel tacked, just as if he had been in command of the *Forward*.

Doctor Clawbonny's kindness and caresses might have tamed a tiger, but they entirely failed to win the good graces of the dog; he lost his time and his trouble as well.

This animal answered to no name known in kennel nomenclature, so the men at last called him Captain, for he seemed to be quite at home on board. The dog had evidently been to sea before—this will easily explain the boatswain's joke in reply to Clifton's friend, and as there were not a few who believed it, this supposition was often repeated, and the dog was really expected some day to assume a human shape, and take the command of the vessel.

Richard Shandon may not have felt the same apprehensions, but he was not altogether free from uneasiness; and the evening of the fifth of April, the day before they sailed, he, the doctor, Wall, and Johnson had a long talk on the subject in the after-cabin.

These four were at their tenth glass of grog, their last according to instructions received from Aberdeen every man of crew, from the captain to the stoker, was a teetotalter, and neither to nor beer, nor spirits, were to be obtained on board, except in case of sickness, and prescribed by the doctor. For an hour the conversation had turned on their departure. If the captain's instructions were to be realized to the letter, Shandon would have a letter from him the next day, containing his final orders.

"If this letter," said Shandon, "does not tell me the captain's name, it will, at all events, say whither we are bound—otherwise what course can I take?"

"Upon my word, Shandon," replied the impetuous doctor, "in your place I should sail without the letter, I assure you."

"You seem to have no doubts on the subject, doctor! but to what part of the globe am I to steer? Tell me."

"Towards the North Pole of course. There can be no doubt about that."

"No doubt!" replied Wall, "and why not to the South Pole?"

"The South Pole!" cried the doctor; "never! Do you think the captain would have the idea of risking the brig in a passage across the Atlantic; just think a little, my dear Wall!"

"The doctor has an answer for everything," said the latter.

"Suppose it should be the North," continued Shandon, "tell me, then, doctor, would it be to Spitzbergen, or Greenland, or Labrador, or Hudson's Bay? If every course has the same ending, in impassable floes of ice, they are not the less numerous, and I should be very much at a loss to decide upon any one. Can you give me a clear and distinct answer to that, doctor?"

"No," replied the doctor, rather irritated at having nothing to say; "but, suppose you get no letter, what will you do?"

"I shall do nothing; I shall wait."

"You won't sail?" cried Clawbonny, playing with his glass.

"No; certainly not."

"That is the wisest course," quietly put in Johnson, while the doctor got up and walked round the table, for he could not sit still. "Yes, that is the wisest thing to do; though if we were to delay our departure for any length of time, it would be very much against us: in the first place the season is now favourable, and if our course is to be north, we ought to take advantage of the thaw to get through Davis' Straits. Besides, the crew is getting very uneasy; their friends and comrades are urging them to leave the *Forward*, and their influence may do us some harm."

"And you may add," said Wall, "if the panic once becomes general among the crew, they will desert to the very last man; and I really do not see how we could ever get another together."

"But what is to be done?" asked Shandon.

"As you said," replied the doctor, "wait, but wait until to-morrow

he joins you despair. The captain has as yet fulfilled his engagements ever with regularity, which is the best omen; there is, therefore, no reason for concluding that we shall not be informed of our destination at the proper time; I have no doubt myself that to-morrow we shall be sailing in the Irish Channel. I therefore propose, my friends, that we should have once more a glass of grog to our prosperous voyage. It begins in a fashion which is rather mysterious, but with seamen like you there are a thousand chances to one in favour of a successful termination." And they all four drank their last glass.

"Now, Shandon," said Johnson, "if I can give you any advice, it would be to have everything ready to start; the crew must be made to believe you know what you have to do. Get under weigh to-morrow, letter or no letter; you need not light your fires, the wind promises to remain where it is; nothing will be easier than to stand out under sail; let the pilot board you; get out of dock with the tide, and anchor just below Birkenhead: our men will have no more communication with the shore, and if this infernal letter comes, it will find us just as well there as elsewhere."

"Well said, Johnson;" and the doctor held out his hand to the boatswain.

"So be it," said Shandon.

Each man then went to his cabin and dozed feverishly till the sun rose. The next, the early delivery, brought no letter for Richard Shandon; nevertheless, he continued his preparations for leaving the dock. It was soon known in Liverpool, and, as we have seen, a great crowd of spectators was soon assembled along the quay of the new Princes' dock.

Several came on board the brig, some to take leave of a comrade, some to dissuade a friend from going, some to have a look at this mysterious craft, and some to try and ascertain the object of the voyage; and they grumbled at finding the commander more silent and reserved than ever.

He had very good reason for being so. Ten o'clock struck, then eleven. The tide would turn about one. Shandon, standing on the poop, cast an uneasy glance on the crowd, trying to discover the secret of his destiny in some one's countenance. But in vain. The seamen of the *Forward* carried out his orders in silence, never taking their eyes off him, and on the look-out for a communication which never came.

Johnson had got everything ready to move. The weather was cloudy, and there was a considerable swell outside; the wind blew strong from the south-east, but they could easily get out of the river.

At twelve still no letter. Doctor Clawbonny walked about in a great state of excitement, gesticulating, looking through his glass, as he said, impatient for the sea. He felt moved, though he did his best not to show it.

Shandon bit his lips till the blood came.

At that moment Johnson went up to him and said—

“Captain, if we intend to profit by this tide, we have no time to lose. It will take us an hour to get clear of the dock.”

Shandon gave one look round, and looked at his watch; the twelve o'clock delivery was over.

“Move her ahead!” he called out to the boatswain.

“Now then, all ashore!” cried the latter, to the spectators on board the *Forward*.

In the inevitable confusion which followed while the sailors were clearing the ship, a dog's bark was distinctly heard. The animal suddenly leaped through the crowd on to the poop. They made way for him, and strange to tell, but to which hundreds of witnesses can testify, this dog-captain held a letter between his teeth.

“A letter!” cried Shandon; “then he must be on board!”

“He was there, no doubt, but not now,” said Johnson, pointing to the deck, completely cleared of all strangers.

“Come here, Captain, come here,” cried the doctor, trying to take the letter, which the dog always refused to give him. He seemed determined to put it into Shandon's hand only.

“Here, Captain!” said he.

The dog went to him, let Shandon take the letter without any difficulty, and then gave three howls which could be distinctly heard in the silence which reigned on board, and along the quay.

Shandon took the letter without opening it.

“Read it at once!” cried the doctor.

Shandon looked at it again. The direction, with neither date nor place, was only addressed—

“To Captain Richard Shandon, on board the brig *Forward*.”

He then opened the letter, and read—

“STEER for Cape Farewell. You will touch there on the 20th of April. If the captain is not then on board, pass through Davis' Straits, and sail up Baffins' Sea as far as Melville Bay.

“The Captain of the *Forward*,

“K. Z.”

Shandon folded up carefully this laconic epistle, put it in his pocket, and ordered them to move. His voice, which sounded above the whistling of the east wind, had quite a solemn effect.

The *Forward* was soon out of the basin, and, in charge of a

Liverpool pilot, whose small cutter followed them, dropped down the Mersey with the tide. The crowd hurried along the outer quay of the Victoria Docks to have a last look at this remarkable vessel. The topsails, foresail, and jib were soon set, and under these sails, the *Forward*, as became her name, after rounding the land at Birkenhead, laid her course with rapidity for the Irish Channel.





CHAPTER V.

AT SEA.

THE wind, though squally, was in their favour, and the *Forward* plunged through the water, and her screw, having been hoisted up, offered no hindrance to her progress. About three she met the steamer which plies between Liverpool and the Isle of Man, with the three legs, the arms of Sicily, on her paddle-boxes. The captain hailed her from his ship, the last adieu the crew of the *Forward* was destined to hear.

At five the pilot left the command in Shandon's hands, and went on board his cutter, which immediately tacked, and soon disappeared in the south-west.

Towards evening the brig doubled the Calf of Man, at the southern end of the island. There was a heavy swell all night, but the *Forward* behaved very well, left the point of Ayr to the north-west, and made her way for the Northern Channel.

Johnson was right; at sea the nautical instinct of the crew asserted its superiority. When they saw the vessel's good qualities, they forgot their strange situation. Life on board went on regularly.

"The sea is a fine thing," said the doctor to Johnson, as he went on deck after breakfast. "I am rather late in making her acquaintance, but I shall soon make up for it."

"You are right, Mr. Clawbonny; I would give all the continents in the world for a corner of the ocean. People pretend sailors soon get tired of their profession; I have been forty years at sea, and I like it as much now as I did at first."

"What pleasure it must be to feel a fine ship under one, and if I am any judge the *Forward* is a right good one."

"You are a good judge of a vessel, doctor," said Shandon, as

he joined the speakers ; " she is a good ship, and no vessel that was ever intended for Arctic navigation was better built for such a service, or better fitted out. That puts me in mind that it is thirty years since Captain James Ross, when he set out to seek for the North-west Passage——"

"Went out in the *Victory*," interrupted the doctor, "a brig of about the same tonnage as ours, and also a steamer."

"What, then, you know all about it?"

"Judge for yourself," continued the doctor; "marine engines were then quite in their infancy, and that of the *Victory* delayed her so much that Captain Ross, after having repaired her piece by piece, ended by taking it out of her, and left it ashore the first place he wintered at."

"The devil!" said Shandon; "you are very well informed, I see."

"Of course I am," replied Clawbonny; "I have read all Parry's, Ross's, and Franklin's works, and MacClure's, Kennedy's, Kane's, and McClintock's reports, and I have not forgotten them. I can tell you, too, that McClintock, on board the *Fox*, a screw vessel not unlike our own, went more directly and with greater ease to the point which he had in view, than all those who had gone before him."

"That is perfectly true," said Shandon; "he was a bold seaman. I have seen him at work; you may say, too, that like him we shall find ourselves in Davis' Straits in the month of April, and if we can only get through the ice our voyage will be advanced considerably. Unless it happens to us, as it did to the *Fox* in 1857, to be caught by the ice in Baffin's Bay the first year, and forced to winter among the ice floes."

"Let us hope we may be more fortunate, Mr. Shandon," said Johnson; "if we can't get where we wish with a vessel like the *Forward*, we had better give it up altogether."

"And," returned the doctor, "if the captain is really on board, he knows better than we do what ought to be done, the more so that we are quite in the dark about it, for his exceedingly laconic letter gives us no information as to the object of the voyage."

"It is enough now," replied Shandon, hastily, "to know what course we are to take; and now, for a month at least, I think we may do without the supernatural intervention of the unknown and his instructions. Besides, you are aware what I think about him."

"Ha, ha! I thought as you did at first, that this man would leave the command of the vessel in your hands, and would not come on board at all, but now——"

"But now——" replied Shandon, rather irritated.

"But since that second letter came on board I have been forced to modify my opinion in that respect."

"And why, doctor?"

"Because, though that letter tells you what course to take, it

gives you no information with regard to the *Forward's* destination ; now we ought to know where we are bound. How are you to have a third letter now you are at sea ? The postal service on the coast of Greenland must be very imperfectly done. Look here, Shandon, I think that man is waiting for us at some Danish settlement, at Holsteinborg or Uppernawik ; he has gone there to complete his freight of seal skins, buy his sledges and his dogs, and complete all his preparations for a voyage in the Arctic seas. I should be no wise surprised to see him some fine morning walk out of his cabin and take command of the ship as naturally as possible."

"May be," replied Shandon, drily, "but in the meantime the wind is rising, and I cannot risk my topgallant-masts in such weather."

Shandon left the doctor, and ordered the loftier sails to be stowed.

"He does not like that idea," said the doctor to the boatswain.

"No," said the latter ; "more's the pity, for you may very likely be right, Mr. Clawbonny."

On Saturday evening the *Forward* doubled the Mull of Galloway, the light-house being made in the north-east ; during the night they left the Mull of Cantire to the northward, and to the eastward Cape Fair on the Irish coast. About three in the morning the brig had Rathlin Island on her starboard beam, and passed from the North Channel into the ocean.

It was Sunday, the 8th of April ; the English, and especially English sailors, observe this day strictly, and the doctor willingly read the Bible during part of the morning to the men.

The wind blew a gale at last, and tended to drive the brig on the coast of Iceland. The sea ran high, and the vessel rolled heavily. If the doctor was not sea-sick it was because he was determined not to be so, for he had every opportunity afforded him. At mid-day Cape Malinhead disappeared to the southward ; and that was the last glimpse of Europe those hardy seamen were destined to behold, and more than one took a long look at it, who were fated never to see it again.

The latitude by observation was then fifty-five degrees fifty-seven minutes, and the longitude, according to the chronometers, seven degrees forty minutes.

The gale subsided about nine in the evening, the *Forward* still holding a good course to the north-west. This day afforded them a good opportunity of judging her sea-going qualities ; and as the judges had said at Liverpool, she was, above all, built to sail well.

For several following days the *Forward* made good way to the north-west. The wind went round to the south, and the sea rose ; the brig was then carrying all sail. A few petrels and puffins came flying round the poop, and the doctor shot one of the latter, which fell on the deck.

The harpooner, Simpson, picked it up and gave it to the doctor.

"Not worth powder and shot, Mr. Clawbonny," said he.

"On the contrary, it is very good to eat."

"What! are you going to eat it?"

"And you shall taste it, my good fellow," said the doctor laughing.

"Bah," said Simpson, "it is rank and oily, like all sea-fowl."

"Very likely," replied the doctor; "but I know how to dress them, and if you can taste anything like a sea-fowl flavour in it I promise never to shoot another."

"Are you a cook as well, Mr. Clawbonny?" asked Johnson

"A learned man ought to know something of everything!"

"Then, Simpson, you had better look out," observed the boat-swain; "the doctor is a skilful man, and he will make this puffin taste like a grouse."

And the doctor succeeded perfectly with his game; he very cleverly cleaned it of all the fat which lies under the skin, chiefly on the thighs, and with it he removed all the rankness and fishy taste which is so unpleasant in all sea-fowl; prepared in this manner even Simpson declared it was excellent.

During this last gale Richard Shandon was able to ascertain the qualities of his men; he had observed every one of them, as every commander ought to do who intends to be prepared for future danger. He knew on whom he could reckon in time of need.

James Wall was an officer entirely devoted to Shandon, he understood his orders, and carried them out well, but he might fail in the initiative; as third officer he was in the right place.

Johnson, accustomed to rough weather, an old navigator in the Arctic sea, had nothing to learn which required either coolness or courage.

Simpson, the harpooner, and Bell, the carpenter, were men to be relied upon for duty and discipline. The ice-master, Foker, an experienced seaman, had been brought up in the same school as Johnson, and was qualified to render important services.

Garry and Bolton seemed the best of the seamen; Bolton was a gay, talkative fellow; Garry was a man about thirty-five, with a face full of energy, but rather pale and quiet.

The three men, Pen, Clifton, and Gripper, seemed the least ardent and resolute; they were always ready to grumble; Gripper even wanted to leave the *Forward* on the eve of her departure, but shame kept him on board. As long as everything went well, if there was not too much danger to be incurred, nor too much work to be done, these three men might be relied upon; but they wanted plenty of food, for of these it might be said their hearts were in their bellies. Though they were warned before they joined, they became teetotallers with a very bad grace, and at dinner-time they regretted their glass of spirits or grog; they made up for it, however, in the tea and coffee they consumed, of which there was an abundance always served out.

As for the two engineers, Brunton and Plover, and Warren the stoker, they had hitherto done nothing but stand with their arms folded.

Thus Shandon knew what he had to expect from them all.

On the 14th of April the *Forward* crossed the Gulf Stream, which, after flowing along the east coast of America to the banks of Newfoundland, trends to the north-east along the coast of Norway.

They were then in latitude fifty-one degrees thirty-seven minutes, and longitude twenty-two degrees fifty-eight minutes, two hundred miles from the point of Greenland. It became much colder; the thermometer fell to thirty-two, or freezing point.

The doctor, without yet putting on his winter clothing, had adopted a sea dress in common with officers and men; it was a pleasure to see him, in his long boots, an oilskin hat, and trousers and jacket of the same material; when wet from the heavy rain, or from the seas which the brig shipped occasionally, the doctor resembled some marine animal, a comparison which the doctor heard with a certain feeling of satisfaction.

For two days the sea was very rough; the wind veered to the north-west, and retarded the *Forward's* progress. From the 14th to the 16th of April there was a great swell; but on Monday a heavy downpour came on, which stilled the sea almost immediately. Shandon called the doctor's attention to this circumstance.

"That," said Clawbonny, "confirms the curious observations made by Scoresby, the whaler, who communicated them to the Royal Society of Edinburgh, of which I am a corresponding member. You observe that while it rains the waves are less easily acted upon, even when exposed to violent winds; and, on the contrary, in dry weather the sea is more easily agitated by a much slighter breeze."

"How do you explain that phenomenon, doctor?"

"It is very simple; there is no explanation to give."

At that moment the ice-master, who was keeping his watch on the foretopsail-yard, signalled a floating mass on the starboard bow, about fifteen miles to leeward.

"An iceberg in these waters?" cried the doctor.

Shandon brought his glass to bear in the direction pointed out, and confirmed the pilot's report.

"That is very curious!" said the doctor.

"Does that surprise you?" said the commander, laughing; "are we actually fortunate enough to meet with something to astonish you?"

"I am astonished, and I am not," replied the other, smiling; "since the brig *Ann of Poole*, from Greenspond, was beset in the year 1813 by perfect fields of ice, in the forty-fourth degree of latitude north, and Dayement, her captain, counted them by hundreds."

"Good," observed Shandon; "you can tell us something about that, too."

"Oh, not much," said Clawbonny, modestly, "if it is not that ice has been met with in still lower latitudes."

"You can't teach me much about that, my dear doctor, for when I was a cabin boy on board the *Fly* sloop of war——"

"In 1818," continued the doctor, "at the end of March or the beginning of April, you passed between two large fields of ice in the forty-second degree of latitude."

"That is too much!" cried Shandon.

"But it is true. So I need not be so very much surprised, for we are two degrees farther to the north, at meeting an iceberg in the *Forward's* course."

"You are like a draw well, doctor, you need only let the bucket down, when you want any information."

"No, I am dry sooner than you think; but now, if I could only have a closer look at this curious phenomenon, my dear Shandon, I should be the happiest of doctors."

"Just so. Johnson," called Shandon to the boatswain, "I think the wind is getting up."

"Yes, captain, we don't move ahead much, and we shall soon have the currents of Davis' Straits against us."

"You are right, Johnson, and if we are to sight Cape Farewell on the 20th of April we must get up steam, or we shall find ourselves on the coast of Labrador. Mr. Wall, will you order the fires to be lighted?"

The commander's orders were executed. In an hour sufficient steam was up, sails were stowed, and the screw, cutting its way through the water, drove the *Forward* onwards in the teeth of the north-westerly wind.





CHAPTER VI.

THE GREAT POLAR CURRENT.

SOON numerous flocks of birds, petrels, puffins, ducks, and others, inhabitants of those desolate shores, announced their approach to Greenland. The *Forward* was getting fast to the northward, leaving a long line of black smoke to leeward.

On Tuesday, the 17th of April, about eleven in the morning, the ice-master signalled the first appearance of ice blink. It was about twenty miles distant on the N.N.W. This land of dazzling white lighted up the whole atmosphere near the horizon, in spite of thick clouds. Men of experience on board could not be deceived about this phenomenon, and they knew from its whiteness that this blink must proceed from an extensive ice floe about thirty miles out of sight, and arose from the reflection of luminous rays.

Towards evening the wind veered round to the south and became favourable; Shandon was able to set his canvass again, and as a measure of economy he let his fires go down. The *Forward* steered her course for Cape Farewell under topsails, foresail, and jib.

On the 18th, at three, they came to an ice stream, which they recognized by a thin white line, very bright, which stood out brilliantly between the lines of the sea and sky. It evidently drifted more from the east coast of Greenland than from Davis' Straits, for the ice generally keeps in preference on the west coast of Baffin's Sea.

An hour later the *Forward* passed through detached portions of the ice stream, and even in the most compact parts the ice fields, though welded together, followed the movement of the swell of the sea.

The next day the look-out signalled a vessel; it was the *Valkyrien*, a Danish corvette, which passed close to the *Forward*, in the

direction of the banks of Newfoundland. They felt the current of the strait, and Shandon had to press sail on his vessel to go up it.

The commander, the doctor, Wall, and Johnson, were at that moment on the poop, examining the direction and the force of the current. The doctor inquired if it was of uniform strength in Baffin's Sea.

"To be sure," said Shandon, "and sailing vessels have a great deal of difficulty in working up against it."

"The more so," said Wall, "that it is to be met with on the east coast of America as well as on the west coast of Greenland."

"Then," said the doctor, "that is what shows in a singular manner how the explorers of a North-west Passage are right in their theory. This current runs at a rate of about five miles an hour, and it is difficult to believe that it has its origin at the bottom of a bay.

"And it is the more likely, doctor," returned Shandon, "that if this current runs from north to south, one would find a contrary current in Behring's Straits flowing from south to north, which ought to be the origin of this one."

"Consequently, my friends," said Clawbonny, "it shows that America is completely detached from the Polar lands, and that the waters of the Pacific flow along its coasts into the Atlantic. Besides, the higher level of the former is a good reason why its waters should flow towards the seas of Europe."

"But," observed Shandon, "there ought to be facts to support this theory, and if there are," he continued, ironically, "this learned man ought to be acquainted with them."

"Well, if that in any way interests you, I can tell you that whales which have been wounded and lost in Davis' Straits have been taken some time after in the vicinity of Tartary with harpoons of European manufacture still sticking in them."

"Unless they doubled Cape Horn or the Cape of Good Hope, they must necessarily have rounded the northern coast of America. That is indisputable, doctor."

"If you are not convinced yet, my good Shandon," said the doctor, with a smile, "I could give you other facts, such as the drift wood of which Davis' Straits are full, consisting of larch, aspen and other trees from the tropics. Now we know the Gulf Stream would keep this wood from entering the straits; if they came out of it they must have passed through by Behring's Straits."

"I am convinced, doctor, and I confess it would be difficult to remain incredulous with you."

"See," cried Johnson, "here is something come on purpose to enlighten our discussion. I can see a large piece of wood; if the commander allows we will get that trunk of a tree on board and inquire what country it comes from."

"That is it," said the doctor; "the example to follow the rule."

Shandon gave the necessary orders, and the brig was steered

towards the piece of wood, and the crew with some trouble hauled it on board.

It was a log of mahogany eaten to its centre by worms ; had it not been for that it would not have floated.

"This is glorious," cried the doctor, enthusiastically, "for since the Atlantic currents have not been able to carry it into Davis' Straits, since it has not been borne into the polar basin by the rivers of Northern America, for this tree grows under the equator, it is evident that it comes direct from Behring's Straits. And see here, gentlemen ; look at this marine worm which has eaten into it, it belongs to a species known only in warm countries."

"It is certain," said Wall ; "that shows the disbelievers in the famous Passage are wrong."

"It silences them entirely," replied the doctor. "Now I will give the itinerary of this piece of mahogany. It has been carried down to the Pacific Ocean by some river of the Isthmus of Panama or Guatemala ; thence the current has conveyed it along the coast of America to Behring's Straits, and it has then been obliged to enter the polar seas ; it is neither so old, nor has it been so long in the water that there is any difficulty in assigning a recent date for its departure ; it has had the good fortune to keep clear of the numerous straits which open out of Baffin's Sea, and hurried along by the north current has come by Davis' Straits to be hoisted on board the *Forward*, to the great satisfaction of Doctor Clawbonny, who asks the commander's permission to keep a specimen of it."

"Do so," replied Shandon, "but allow me, in my turn, to tell you that you will not be the only possessor of such a waif. The Danish governor of Disco Island——"

"On the coast of Greenland, has a table made from the trunk of a tree found under similar circumstances ; I know it, my dear Shandon. Well, I don't envy him his table, for if it was not for the trouble I could furnish a bed-room out of that piece there."

During the night from Wednesday to Thursday the wind blew very strong ; the approach to the coast offered dangers at a time when icebergs are numerous ; the commander therefore kept on under less sail, and the *Forward* was reduced to her foresail and fore-staysail.

The thermometer fell to zero. Shandon distributed proper clothing to the men ; a woollen jacket and trousers, flannel shirt and wadmel stockings, like those worn by the Norwegian peasants. Each man was also provided with a pair of water-tight sea-boots.

Captain contented himself with his own fur ; he seemed to care very little for the changes of temperature ; and a Dane had no right to be very particular. He was hardly ever seen, but remained generally hidden in the darkest corners of the ship.

Towards evening the coast of Greenland was visible through a break in the fog, in longitude thirty-seven degrees two minutes seven seconds ; the doctor through his telescope would make out for

a moment a line of peaks furrowed by large glaciers, but the fog rapidly shut them out of sight, like the curtain of a theatre which comes down at the most interesting part of a piece.

On the morning of the 20th of April, the *Forward* found herself in view of an iceberg about a hundred and fifty feet high, stranded there from time immemorial; thaws had had no effect upon it, and had respected its strange outline. Snow had seen it; Ross made an exact sketch of it in 1829 and in 1851; the French Lieutenant Bellot, on board the *Prince Albert*, saw it perfectly. Of course the doctor wished to preserve the outline of this celebrated mountain, and made a very successful sketch of it.

At last, with a temperature which at midday was only twelve degrees, under a snowy and foggy sky, they made out Cape Farewell. The *Forward* arrived there at the appointed day. The unknown captain, if it pleased him to come and take up his post in such diabolical weather, had no right to complain.

"Here then," said the doctor, "is this celebrated cape, well named indeed; many have weathered it like us, who were fated never to behold it again. Is it then an eternal adieu bid to one's friends in Europe? You have all passed it, Frobisher, Knight, Barlow, Vaughan, Scroggs, Barentz, Hudson, Blosseville, Franklin, Crozier, Bellot, never again to see your homes, and this to you has indeed been Cape Farewell."

It was about the year 970 that adventurers from Iceland discovered Greenland. Sebastian Cabot in 1498 reached fifty-six degrees of latitude, Gaspard and Michael Cotréal in 1500 and 1502 reached sixty degrees, and Martin Frobisher in 1576 arrived at the bay which bears his name to this day.

John Davis had the honour of discovering the strait in 1585, and two years later this bold traveller and great whale fisher reached the seventy-third parallel, twenty-seven degrees from the pole.

Barentz in 1596, Weymouth in 1602, James Hall in 1605 and 1607, Hudson, who gave his name to that vast bay which hollows out so deeply the continent of America, James Poole, in 1611, advanced more or less up the strait in search of a north-west passage, the discovery of which would considerably shorten the communication between the two worlds.

Baffin, in 1616, discovered Lancaster Straits in the sea which bears his name; he was followed in 1619 by James Munk, and in 1719 by Knight, Barlow, Vaughan and Scroggs, and nothing was ever heard of them. In 1776 Lieutenant Pickersgill, who had been sent to meet Captain Cook, then attempting to get through Behring's Straits, reached the sixty-eighth degree; the following year Young, in making the same attempt, got as far as Woman's Island.

Then came James Ross, who, in 1818, surveyed the coast of Baffin's Sea, and corrected the hydrographical errors of his predecessors.

At last, in 1819 and 1820, the celebrated Parry passed Lancaster

Straits, succeeded, in spite of numberless obstacles, in reaching Melville Island, and gained the premium of five thousand pounds, promised by Act of Parliament to the English sailors who would reach the hundred and seventieth meridian by a higher latitude than the seventy-seventh parallel. In 1826 Beechey touched Chamisso Island; James Ross wintered from 1829 to 1833 in Prince Regent Straits, and among other important labours discovered the magnetic pole.

About the same time Franklin, on land, was surveying the northern shores of America, from Mackenzie River to Point Turnagain; Captain Back followed in his steps from 1823 to 1835, and these explorations were completed in 1829 by Dease, Simpson, and Doctor Rae.

Lastly, Sir John Franklin, still anxious to discover the North-west Passage, left England in 1845 with the *Erebus* and *Terror*, penetrated to Baffin's Sea, and since his passage to Disco Island, no news had been received of his expedition.

This disappearance determined the numerous researches which the discovery of the passage had produced. England's boldest sailors, as well as those of France and America, hurried off to those terrible regions, and, thanks to their efforts, the map of that country, so laboured at and so difficult to make, could at last take its place in the archives of the Royal Geographical Society.

The curious history of these countries was thus present to the doctor's imagination as he leaned over the rail and watched the wake of the brig. The names of these bold travellers crowded into his memory, and he fancied he could see the pale phantoms of those who never came back under the iceberg's frozen arch.





CHAPTER VII.

DAVIS' STRAITS.

DURING that day the *Forward* easily forced her way through the half-broken ice ; the wind was fair, but the temperature very low, and the currents of air passing over the ice fields carried their chill with them.

At night the most vigorous attention was exacted ; for the icebergs were crowded together in the narrow passage ; a hundred could often be seen at one time on the horizon ; they became loosened from the higher points of the coast from the action of the waves and the influence of the April weather, to dissolve or sink in the depths of the ocean. They also often fell in with long rafts of wood, of which they were obliged to keep clear ; the crow's nest was therefore set up at the foremast-head ; it consisted of a barrel, in which the ice-master, in some degree sheltered from the wind, could keep a look out over the sea, signal what ice was in sight, and even, if necessary, pilot the ship.

The nights were short ; the sun had reappeared since the 31st of January, in consequence of the refraction, and tended to rise higher still above the horizon. But the snow impeded the view, and though it did not cause obscurity, yet rendered this navigation a difficult task.

On the 21st of April Cape Desolation was sighted, surrounded by mist ; working the ship fatigued the crew ; since the brig had entered the ice the men had not had a moment's rest ; they were soon obliged to have recourse to steam to force a passage through these heaped-up blocks of ice. The doctor and Johnson were talking together aft, while Shandon took some hours' rest in his cabin. Clawbonny very much enjoyed the old seaman's conversation, who had gained his education from his interesting voyages. The doctor felt great friendship for him, which the boatswain fully reciprocated.

"See here, Mr. Clawbonny," said Johnson, "this country is not like all others; they call it Greenland, but there are not many weeks in the year when it deserves that name."

"Who knows, my good Johnson," replied the doctor, "if in the tenth century this land did not deserve to be called so? More revolutions than one of that description have taken place on our globe, and I should astonish you very much if I was to tell you that according to Iceland chronicles there were two hundred flourishing villages on this continent, eight or nine hundred years ago."

"You would surprise me in truth, Mr. Clawbonny; I can hardly credit it, for it is a miserable country."

"Miserable as it is, it offers an adequate shelter to its inhabitants, and even to civilized Europeans."

"No doubt! At Disco and at Uppernawik we fell in with men who were contented to live in such a climate, but I have always thought more from compulsion than taste."

"That I willingly believe; still man accustoms himself to everything, and these Greenlanders do not seem to me to be as much to be pitied as the labouring class in our great cities; they may be unfortunate, but they are certainly not so wretched; I say wretched, but that word does not express my idea. In fact, if they do not possess the comforts of temperate countries, these people, formed for this rude climate, can evidently find enjoyments in it, such as we are unable to conceive."

"We must conclude so, Mr. Clawbonny, for heaven is just; but my many voyages have often brought me to these shores, and my heart has always ached at the sight of these dismal solitudes. For instance, they might have enlivened these capes, bays, and promontories, for Cape Farewell and Cape Desolation are not names to attract navigators."

"I have made the same remark," said the doctor; "but these names have a geographical interest which we must not lose sight of; they describe the adventures of those who gave them, with the names of Davis, Baffin, Hudson, Ross, Parry, Franklin, and Bellot. When I meet with Cape Desolation I find Mercy Bay close by; Cape Providence is a companion to Port Anxiety; Repulse Bay brings me to Cape Eden; and, leaving Cape Turnagain, I find a resting-place in Refuge Bay; thus I have before my eyes a succession of dangers, checks, obstacles, successes, and despair mingled with names great in my country's history, and like a series of ancient medals, this nomenclature brings to mind the whole history of these seas."

"Very fairly argued, Mr. Clawbonny. I only trust we may fall in with Success Bay oftener than Cape Desolation."

"I hope so too, Johnson; but tell me, has the crew recovered from its former panic?"

"A little, but still, if I must tell the truth, since we entered the straits they have begun to talk about this phantom captain again; more than one expected to see him appear at the point off

Greenland, and, as yet, nothing has been seen of him. Come, now, Mr. Clawbonny, between ourselves, are you not a little astonished yourself?"

"I am indeed, Johnson."

"Do you believe in his existence?"

"Certainly."

"But what can be his reasons for acting in this manner?"

"If I must tell you all I think, I should say that this man wished to draw the crew so far from home that there should be no retreat for them. Now, if he had appeared on board at the moment of leaving the dock, every man would have insisted on knowing where the vessel was bound, and that would have embarrassed him."

"Why?"

"Well, if he has some superhuman enterprise in view, if he hopes to penetrate where so many have failed, do you believe he ever would have found a crew? But once at sea, he may get so far that they will be obliged to go with him."

"It may be so, Mr. Clawbonny; I have known more than one bold adventurer whose name alone was a terror to others, and who could have found no one to accompany him in his perilous expeditions."

"Except myself," interrupted the doctor.

"And myself, too, after you," replied Johnson. "Well, I was saying, our captain belongs no doubt to that class of adventurers. I suppose we shall see this brave unknown come quietly on board and take the command when we get near Uppernawik or Melville Bay, and then he will let us know how far he intends to take the vessel."

"I think as you do, Johnson; but the difficulty will be to get as far as Melville Bay; do you observe how we are already surrounded by ice? There is hardly room for the *Forward's* passage. Just look at that immense plain."

"In whaler's language, Mr. Clawbonny, we call that an ice field, which means a continuous and apparently boundless surface of ice."

"And in this direction, this broken-up field, and these long slabs more or less connected at their edges?"

"That is a pack; when it is round it is called a patch, and when elongated, a stream."

"And that floating ice thereabouts?"

"That is driftice; when loftier it becomes icebergs or ice hills; it is dangerous for ships to foul them, they must always have a wide berth given them. Look over there, on that ice field; do you observe a protuberance produced by the ice being pressed together? We call that a hummock; if its base was under water it would be called a calf; it was absolutely necessary to name all these things in order to recognize them."

"This is really a curious spectacle," cried the doctor, contem-

plating these wonders of the polar seas ; " how the imagination is struck by these varied scenes ! "

" It is, indeed," returned Johnson ; " the icicles assume the most fantastic shapes, and our men have no trouble in explaining them after their fashion."

" Look, Johnson, look at that assemblage of blocks of ice ! One might say it was some strange Eastern city, with its minarets and its mosques, under the pale light of the moon. Look farther at that long Gothic arcade, which recalls to mind Henry the Seventh's chapel or the Houses of Parliament ! "

" True, Mr. Clawbonny, there is something for every man's taste ; but they are cities and churches dangerous to inhabit or to frequent. We must not make too close an acquaintance with them. Those minarets occasionally totter on their base, and the smallest of them would crush the *Forward* to atoms."

" And yet men dared to venture into these seas before they had steam at their command. How can one believe that a sailing vessel could be steered with safety among these moving reefs ? "

" It has been done, however, Mr. Clawbonny, when the wind was against us. It has happened to me more than once ; we have made fast to one of these blocks, and waited patiently ; we have drifted about with it, and waited till the favourable moment came for continuing our course. It must be said that we were then as many months on a voyage as, with a fair share of luck, we shall now be days."

" It seems to me," said the doctor, " the temperature is getting lower."

" That's unfortunate," replied Johnson, " for we want a thaw to break up these masses and send them to dissolve in the Atlantic ; they are more numerous in Davis' Straits, because the land closes in between Cape Walsingham and Holsteinborg ; but beyond the sixty-seventh degree we shall find more navigable seas during the month of May."

" Yes ; but we must get there first."

" We must get there, Mr. Clawbonny. In June and July we should have found the passage clear, as the whalers do ; but our orders were precise ; we were to find ourselves here in April, and, if I am not mistaken, our captain is a bold fellow, with one idea in his head. He has set out thus early to get all the farther. Well, if we live we shall see."

The doctor was right about the fall in the temperature. At mid-day the thermometer was at six degrees, and there was a north-westerly breeze, which, though it cleared the sky, assisted the current in driving floating ice across the *Forward's* course. They were not all obeying the same impulsion, for it was not seldom that the higher blocks, caught under water by some counter current, drifted along in an opposite direction.

The difficulty of this navigation may be easily understood. The

engineers had not a moment's rest ; the engine was directed from the deck by means of levers, which opened, stopped, and reversed them according to the orders of the officers of the watch. Sometimes they had to hasten through an opening in a field of ice, sometimes to keep ahead of an iceberg, which threatened to close up the only passage practicable, or else sometimes a block turning suddenly over obliged them to go astern to avoid being crushed beneath it. This mass of drifting ice, piled up and amalgamated by the current from the north, pressed into the passage, and if caught by the frost might oppose an insurmountable barrier to the advance of the *Forward*.

Birds were found in innumerable flocks in these regions. Petrels and other sea-fowl flew round them, deafening them with their screams ; a great number of short-necked, big-headed gulls, with very long wings, were among them, playing in the snow driven over them by the wind.

Quantities of wood drifted by ; several Cachalot whales approached the vessel, but it was out of all question to chase them, though Simpson longed to harpoon one. Towards evening they saw several seals swimming among the blocks of ice.

On the 22nd the thermometer was still lower. The *Forward* was obliged to go at full steam to get through the passes ; the wind seemed steady in the north-west. They stowed their sails.

This day, Sunday, the crew had little to do. After divine service, which was read by Shandon, the crew chased guillemots and caught several. These birds, prepared according to Clawbonny's method, formed an agreeable addition to the table of both officers and men.

At three in the afternoon the *Forward* was off Kin de Sael, east by a quarter north-east, and Sukkertop Mountain, south-east by a quarter of east-half-east. There was a heavy swell on. From time to time a thick fog fell from the grey sky. At midday, however, they were able to take an observation. The ship was in latitude sixty-five degrees twenty minutes, and longitude fifty-four degrees twenty-two minutes. They had to reach two degrees farther before they could fall in with better navigation and a more open sea.

For the three following days, the 24th, 25th, and 26th of April, they had to struggle constantly against ice, and working the engine became excessively fatiguing, as they were backing astern almost as often as moving ahead.

The fog was so thick that the approach of the icebergs was only recognized by the dull report of the avalanches ; then the vessel either ported or starboarded her helm immediately. They were in constant danger of fouling masses of freshwater ice, remarkable for their extreme transparency and their rock-like hardness. Shandon did not neglect to fill up his water tanks by taking several tons of this ice on board.

The doctor could not accustom himself to the optical illusions produced by refraction in these regions ; thus an iceberg would seem

like a small white mass close to the brig while it was really ten or twelve miles distant ; he tried to accustom his sight to this singular phenomenon, in order to be able to correct its error the sooner.

At last the men were completely exhausted by the labour of hauling the vessel through the ice fields, and of fending off the most menacing blocks by means of long poles, and still on Friday, the 27th of April, the *Forward* was yet detained within the impassable limits of the polar circle.





CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT THE CREW HAD TO SAY ABOUT IT.

HOWEVER the *Forward* succeeded at last in gaining a few more minutes north ; but instead of flying from the enemy, they were soon obliged to face it ; ice fields, several miles in extent, were drawing nearer, and as these masses in motion represent a pressure of more than ten million tons, it is as well to avoid their embraces. Ice saws were got ready for immediate use. Part of the crew took to their hard work very philosophically, but the others grumbled, though they did not refuse to obey. While they were getting the saws ready, Garry, Bolton, Pen, and Gripper, gave utterance to their different opinions.

"By the Lord!" cried Bolton, gaily, "I don't know why the idea has come into my head, of a jolly public-house in Water Street, where one could find oneself very comfortable between a glass of gin and a bottle of porter ; don't you see it too, Gripper?"

"If I must tell the truth," returned the sailor addressed, who generally seemed to be in a bad humour, "I assure you I can't see anything of the sort from here."

"It's only a way of talking, Gripper ; it is very clear in these cities of snow, which Dr. Clawbonny admires so much, there is not the smallest public where a good fellow can get half a pint of rum to moisten his gullet."

"You may be sure of that, Bolton ; and, you may add, there is nothing on board to refresh one properly. It was a droll idea to keep men voyaging in the northern seas from all spirituous liquors whatsoever."

"But," said Garry, "the doctor told us that we must avoid all intoxicating liquor if we wished to avoid the scurvy, keep one's health and get on."

"But I don't want to get on, Garry, and I find it is very well to

have come thus far, without insisting on going where the devil won't let us."

"Well, then, we shall not go," replied Pen. "I think I have quite forgotten the taste of rum."

"But," said Bolton, "remember what the doctor told you."

"Oh," replied Pen, in a surly tone, "let him say what he likes--- who knows if this is only an excuse for being stingy with the liquors?"

"Perhaps Pen is right," replied Gripper.

"Nonsense," said Bolton, "his nose is too red for that; and if it loses a little of its colour in sailing under these regulations, Pen need not grumble!"

"What has my nose to do with you," replied the sailor roughly, attacked on his most vulnerable point; "my nose wants none of your advice; it does not ask for it; look after your own."

"Come, Pen, don't be angry, I did not think your nose was so susceptible. I like a glass of whisky as well as any one, particularly in such a temperature as this; but after all it does more harm than good; I can do without it willingly."

"You may go without it," said Warren, the stoker, taking part in the conversation; "well, perhaps, every one else on board does not go without it."

"What do you mean, Warren?" said Garry, staring at him.

"I mean to say, for some reason or another, there is liquor on board, and I believe they don't stint themselves in the after-cabin!"

"How do you know?"

Warren had no answer ready, he was only talking for talking's sake, as they say.

"You see, Garry," said Bolton, "Warren knows nothing about it."

"Well, then," said Pen, "let us ask the commander for grog all round; we have well earned it, and we shall see what he has to say."

"I should advise you to let it alone," replied Garry.

"Why?" cried Pen and Gripper together.

"Because the commander will say no; you knew the regulations when you shipped; you ought to have thought it over then."

"Besides," said Bolton, who was always ready to side with Garry, "Richard Shandon is not master on board this craft; he obeys orders as well as we do."

"Whose orders?" asked Pen.

"The captain's?"

"Always that confounded captain," cried Pen; "can't you understand there is no more a captain on board than there is a grogshop on those banks of ice? It is only a way of refusing civilly what we have a right to insist upon."

"But I tell you there is a captain," retorted Bolton; "and I will lay two months' pay we shall see him before long."

"All right," said Pen, "I should like to have a word or two with him."

"Who is talking of the captain?" said a fresh speaker. It was Clifton, who was both superstitious and envious at the same time. "Does anybody know anything about the captain?" he asked.

"No," they all answered at once.

"Well, I expect to find him some fine morning in his cabin, without any one knowing how or when he came there."

"Nonsense," replied Bolton; "you fancy, Clifton, that fellow is a hobgoblin, a sort of Highland elf."

"Laugh as long as you like, Bolton, that won't make me change my opinion. Every day as I pass before his cabin-door I take a peep through the key hole, and one of these mornings I shall come and tell you what the captain is, and what he is like."

"Why, the devil take him, I suppose your captain is made like every one else; and if he wants to take us where we don't want to go, I, Pen, will give him a bit of my mind."

"Good," said Bolton, "here is Pen ready to quarrel with him already, though he has never seen him yet."

"Who has not seen him?" replied Clifton, with the air of a man who knew all about it; "that is yet to be proved."

"What do you mean to say?" asked Gripper.

"I know."

"But we don't."

"Well, then, hasn't Pen already had a row with him?"

"With the captain?"

"Yes, with the dog-captain, for it is exactly the same thing."

The sailors looked at one another without knowing what to say.

"Man or dog," said Pen, between his teeth, "I promise you that animal shall be paid off some day!"

"Look here, Clifton," said Bolton; "seriously do you mean to say, as Johnson did when he was joking, that that dog is the real captain?"

"Certainly I do," said Clifton, in a tone of conviction; "and if you had observed it as I have you would have noticed the animal's strange ways."

"What ways? Tell us."

"Have you never remarked the way in which he walks up and down the poop; what an air of authority he has; how he looks how the sails stand, as if it was his watch?"

"That is quite true," said Gripper; "and I positively saw him one evening with his paws on the wheel."

"It is not possible," said Bolton.

"And now," continued Clifton, "doesn't he go every night and walk about the ice fields without caring for cold or for bears either?"

"That's very true," said Bolton.

"Do you ever see that animal, like any other honest dog, seek the society of men, or put his nose in at the galley or watch Strong

when he takes the commander anything good? Can't you hear him howling at night when he has gone two or three miles from the ship; it is enough to make you feel cold all down your back, and that is not very easy in such a temperature as this; and, last of all, have you ever seen this beast eat? He takes nothing from any one; his food is always left untouched, and unless some one gives it him privately I have a right to assert this animal lives without eating. Now, either he is a phantom, or I am a fool."

"Upon my word," said Bell, the carpenter, who had been listening very attentively to Clifton's argument, "upon my word, it may be so."

But the rest of the men said nothing.

"Well," asked Bolton, "where are we going in the *Forward*?"

"I know nothing about it," said the carpenter; "at some given moment Shandon will receive further orders."

"But from whom? through whom?"

"Through whom?"

"Yes; how is he to get them?" asked Bolton, who was becoming rather pressing.

"Come, Bell, tell us," cried all the other sailors.

"From whom? How? Well, I am sure I don't know," said the carpenter, embarrassed in his turn.

"Why, through the dog-captain, of course," cried Clifton; "he has already written once, and surely he can do so again. If I only knew half what that animal knows I should not mind being First Lord of the Admiralty."

"So the upshot of it all is, that you hold to your opinion that the dog is the captain?"

"Yes; just as I have told you."

"Well," muttered Pen, "if that animal does not want to die in the skin of a dog he had better make haste and become a man, for I swear I will settle him some day or other!"

"Why so?" asked Garry.

"Because I choose," replied Pen; "I am not obliged to give a reason to any one."

"Now then, men," cried Johnson, coming up just at the moment the conversation seemed likely to become warm, "look sharp, and get those saws in their places; we must cut our way through the ice floe."

"A Friday, too," said Clifton, shrugging his shoulders; "you will see we shan't pass the polar circle so easily."

The efforts of the crew were nearly without result the whole of that day. Though the *Forward* steamed at full power against the ice, she was unable to cut her way through, and was obliged to anchor for the night.

The doctor had remained for some time quietly in his cabin, reading Arctic voyages; but at last he asked himself, as was his wont, what was the most disagreeable thing he could do at that

moment, and his answer to his own question was, to go on the poop in that temperature, and lend a hand to the men, would not be very pleasant. True to his rule of conduct, he, therefore, left his warm cabin and went to assist in hauling the vessel along. He looked very funny in his green spectacles, by which he preserved his eyes from the pricking of the reflected rays, and in his future observations he was always careful to wear snow spectacles to avoid ophthalmia, which is so frequent in high latitudes.

By the evening the *Forward* was several miles to the northward, thanks to the activity of the men and the ability of Shandon, who never failed to profit by any favourable circumstance. At midnight they passed the sixty-sixth parallel, and the lead having given twenty-three fathoms, Shandon knew he was on the shoal where the Queen's ship, the *Victory*, struck. Land was within thirty miles to the eastward.

Now the masses of ice which had remained motionless till now, parted in several places, and began to move; icebergs seemed to spring up on all points of the horizon; the brig seemed to find herself in a series of moving rocks, any one sufficient to crush her to pieces; it was so difficult to move, that Garry, the best helmsman in the ship, took the wheel; icebergs threatened to close up every moment astern of the brig; the floating ice must be crossed, and prudence, as well as duty, urged them on.

An additional difficulty arose from the impossibility in which Shandon found himself to determine the brig's position among so many varying points.

The crew were divided into two watches, the port and the starboard, each armed with a long pole with an iron head to it to push off the most dangerous-looking blocks. The *Forward* soon entered a pass so narrow, between two lofty blocks, that the ends of her yards touched the sides as hard as a rock. She soon found herself in a winding valley filled with whirlwinds of snow, while the fearful sound of crashing and splitting ice was heard all round them.

They soon found there was no passage through this gorge; an enormous block caught in the channel was drifting rapidly down on the *Forward*; it seemed impossible to get out of its way or to retreat before it.

Shandon and Johnson were standing forward considering their position. Shandon was piloting the vessel with his right hand, and with his left signalling his orders to Wall, who repeated them to the engineer.

"How will this end?" asked the doctor of Johnson.

"As it pleases God," replied the boatswain.

The block of ice a hundred feet high was not more than a cable's length from them, threatening to grind her to atoms.

Pen uttered a frightful oath. "Silence!" cried a voice it was impossible to recognize in the excitement of the moment.

The block was almost upon the brig, and the men, in spite of Shandon's orders, abandoned their poles and went aft. A frightful noise was suddenly heard; a waterspout fell on the vessel's deck, which was lifted up by an enormous wave. The crew gave a cry of terror, while Garry at the wheel kept the *Forward* on her course in spite of her fearful deck load.

And when their trembling looks were cast towards the iceberg it had disappeared; the passage was free, and, beyond a long canal, lighted by the slanting rays of the sun, allowed the brig to pursue her way.

"Well, Dr. Clawbonny," said Johnson, "can you explain that phenomenon to me?"

"It is very simple, my friend," replied the doctor, "and very often happens: when these floating masses become detached from one another by a thaw, they drift away separately, maintaining their equilibrium perfectly; but when they get to the southward, where the water is warmer than the air, their base begins to melt, and the moment must come when their centre of gravity is displaced, And then they must turn over. But if that iceberg had turned over only two minutes later it would have turned over on the brig and buried her beneath it."





CHAPTER IX.

NEWS.

THE polar circle was cleared at last ; the *Forward* passed it the 30th of April at mid-day, abreast of Holsteinberg ; picturesque mountains appeared on the eastern horizon. The sea seemed, it might be said, free from ice ; what there was could be easily avoided. The wind veered round to the south-east, and the brig under foresail, fore-staysail, topsails, and topgallant-sails sailed up Baffin's Sea.

This day it was particularly calm ; and the crew were able to rest themselves ; thousands of birds were flying and swimming about the ship ; the doctor noticed some resembling a teal, having the neck, wings, and back black, and the breast white ; they dived frequently, and were often more than forty seconds under water.

This day would not have offered anything worthy of notice if the following fact, extraordinary as it may seem, had not taken place on board.

At six in the morning, on going into his cabin, after his watch had expired, Shandon found a letter on his table with the following address :

“ To Commander Richard Shandon,

“ on board the *Forward*,

“ Baffin's Sea.”

Shandon could not believe his eyes, but before opening this extraordinary communication, he sent for the doctor, Wall, and the boatswain, and showed them the letter.

“ This is getting serious,” said Johnson.

“ How delightful ! ” thought Clawbonny.

"At last we shall know what this secret is," cried Shandon. He rapidly tore open the envelope, and read as follows—

"COMMANDER,—The captain of the *Forward* is satisfied with the coolness, skill, and courage of your men, your officers, and of yourself, as shown under the late circumstances; he begs you to make his thanks known to the crew.

"Be so good as to direct your course northward to Melville Bay, and thence you will make the attempt to penetrate to Smith's Straits.

"The Captain of the *Forward*,
"K. Z.

"Monday, April 30th, off Cape Washington."

"Is that all?" cried the doctor.

"All," replied Shandon.

The letter fell from his hands.

"Well," said Wall, "this visionary captain says nothing about coming on board, so I conclude he never will come."

"But how did the letter get here?" asked Johnson.

Shandon was silent.

"Wall is right," replied the doctor, who having picked up the letter, was turning it over in every direction; "the captain will not come on board for an excellent reason."

"Which is?" asked Shandon, hurriedly.

"That he is there already," quietly answered the doctor.

"Already!" cried Shandon; "what can you mean?"

"Without that, how can you explain the presence of that letter?"

Johnson nodded his head approvingly.

"It cannot be possible," said Shandon, earnestly. "I know every one of the crew; must we then suppose this captain has been among them ever since the ship left the docks? It is impossible, I tell you. For more than two years there is not one that I have not seen a hundred times at Liverpool; your supposition, doctor, falls to the ground."

"Then, what you do admit is the explanation, Shandon?"

"Any but that. I admit that this captain or some one belonging to him, who knows? may have profited by darkness, fog or whatever way you like to explain it, and slipped on board; we are not far from land; there are Esquimaux Kaiaks which pass unseen among the hammocks of ice; he may have come alongside that way, and put the letter on board; the darkness was sufficiently intense to favour such a plan."

"And also to prevent the brig from being seen;" replied the doctor. "If we have not been able to see a stranger find his way over the side, how could he make the *Forward* out in this fog?"

"That is very clear," said Johnson.

"I return then to my first hypothesis; what do you think of it, Shandon?"

"What you will," replied he, angrily, "except the supposition that this man is on board of us."

"Perhaps," added Wall, "there may be some man in the crew who is in his interest, and who has received instructions from him."

"Perhaps," assented the doctor.

"But who can it be? I repeat I know every one of my men and have done so for a long time."

"Under any circumstances, if this captain presents himself on board, man or devil, we must receive him as such; but there is more information still to be gathered from this letter."

"What?" asked Shandon.

"That we are not only to go to Melville Bay, but also into Smith's Straits."

"You are right," said the doctor.

"Smith's straits," Shandon repeated, mechanically.

"It is therefore quite clear," continued Johnson, "that the *Forward's* destination is not to find the North-west Passage, since we leave on our left the only course leading to it, namely, Lancaster Straits. This forebodes a difficult navigation in unknown seas."

"Yes, Smith's Straits," replied Shandon. "That is the route Kane the American took in 1853, and at what a risk! For a long time he was supposed to be lost in those frightful latitudes. Well, we will go there, since go we must; but where to? to the pole?"

"Why not," said the doctor.

The idea of such a senseless attempt made the boatswain shrug his shoulders.

"To return to the captain," resumed Wall, "if he is in existence I can hardly see on the Greenland coast any other establishments but Lisco or Uppernawik where he can be waiting for us; in a few days we shall know more about it."

"But," asked the doctor of Shandon, "do you not intend to communicate this letter to the crew?"

"With the commander's leave," said Johnson, "I should do nothing of the sort."

"Why not?"

"Because everything that is extraordinary or chimerical tends to discourage our men. They are already very uneasy about the fate of an expedition under such circumstances. Now, if they are once dragged into the supernatural it may have the worst effect possible, and at some critical moment we may not be able to count upon them. What do you say to that, commander?"

"What is your opinion, doctor?"

"I think," replied the doctor, "that Johnson has stated the case very fairly."

"And you, Wall?"

"Under correction, I am of these gentlemen's opinion."

Shandon reflected for some moments; he read the letter over again attentively.

"Gentlemen," said he, "your opinion is certainly a valuable one; but I cannot adopt it."

"Why not, Shandon?" asked the doctor.

"Because the instructions in this letter are formal; they order me to communicate the captain's congratulations to the crew; now as I have always obeyed his orders implicitly, in whatever way they have reached me, I cannot now"—

"However—" began Johnson, who dreaded the effect such a communication would have on the minds of the crew.

"My good Johnson," said Shandon, "I can understand your reasons, which are excellent; but read this."

"He begs you to make his thanks known to the crew."

"Then act accordingly," returned Johnson, who was a strict observer of discipline. "Shall I muster the crew?"

"Do so," replied Shandon.

The news that a communication had been received from the captain was soon spread on board. The sailors were not long in coming on deck, and the commander read the mysterious letter aloud.

A dead silence succeeded; then the crew separated, a prey to a thousand suppositions; Clifton had something to feed the wanderings of his superstitious imagination; he attributed a considerable part of it to the dog captain, and he never failed to salute him whenever he came across him.

"Didn't I tell you," said he to the other sailors, "that animal knows how to write!"

They made no reply to that observation, and even Bell the carpenter was at a loss for an answer.

It was quite evident that if there was no captain on board, his shadow or his spirit was on the watch, and the wiser ones kept their suppositions to themselves.

The 1st of May, at mid-day, the observation gave them sixty-eight degrees of latitude, and fifty-six degrees thirty-two minutes of longitude. The temperature had risen, and the thermometer marked twenty-five degrees above zero.

The doctor was amusing himself by watching a white she-bear at play with her two cubs on an ice pack running out from the land. With Wall and Simpson, he tried to chase her in a boat, but the animal refused battle; and, taking her young ones off with her, the doctor was obliged to give up the pursuit.

Cape Chidley was doubled during the night, with a favourable wind, and the lofty mountains of Disco rose above the horizon. Godhavn Bay, the residence of the governor-general of the Danish settlement, was left to the right. Shandon did not feel disposed to stop there, and soon left the Esquimaux canoes, which were coming off to him, far astern.

Disco is also called Whale Island; it is from this spot that Sir John Franklin wrote to the Admiralty for the last time, the 12th of July, 1845, and it is also at this island that Captain McClintock touched on his return, when he brought back the too certain proofs of the loss of that expedition.

The doctor did not fail to remark the coincidence of these two facts; that sad similarity brought up many memories, but the heights of Disco soon disappeared from his gaze.

There were then numerous icebergs on the coast which the longest thaws had been unable to separate; this continuous line of crests took the strangest forms.

The next day about three, they sighted Sanderson Hope, in the north-east; they left the land about fifteen miles on their starboard beam; the mountains seemed of a reddish brown colour.

During the evening, several whales of the finny tribe, with fins on the back, were playing about among the floating ice, and spouting water and air from their blow holes.

It was during the night of the 3rd and 4th of May that the doctor saw the sun touch the horizon, without dipping his luminous disc behind it, for the first time. Since the 31st of January, its orb had lengthened daily, and it was now light all the twenty-four hours.

For spectators unaccustomed to it, this persistent daylight is an increasing matter of astonishment, and even of fatigue; it is almost impossible to feel how necessary darkness is to the preservation of our eyes. The doctor experienced real pain in becoming used to this continual light, which was rendered still more acute by the reflection of the sun's rays on the ice.

The 5th of May the *Forward* passed the seventy-second parallel; two months later they would have fallen in with numerous whalers fishing in these high latitudes; but the straits were not yet sufficiently open to allow these vessels to penetrate into Baffin's Bay.

The next day, after passing Woman's Island, the brig arrived in sight of Uppernawik, the most northern possession of Denmark on these shores.





CHAPTER X.

PERILOUS NAVIGATION.

SHANDON, Dr. Clawbonny, Johnson, Foker, and Strong the cook, got into the whaleboat, and went ashore.

The governor, his wife, and his five children, all Esquimaux, came politely to meet their visitors. The doctor, being a philologue, knew a little Danish, sufficient to put them on a friendly footing; and Foker, the interpreter of the expedition, as well as ice master, knew about a score of words of the Greenland language, and with twenty words one can get on if one is not ambitious.

The governor was born at Disco Island, and had never quitted his native soil; he did the honours of his town, which was composed of wooden houses, for him and the Lutheran minister, a school and magazines, supported by vessels wrecked on the coast; the rest consists of snow huts, into which the Esquimaux crawl by the only opening.

A great part of the population came out to meet the *Forward*, and more than one native ventured out into the bay in his kaiak, which was about fifteen feet long, and two wide.

The doctor knew that the word Esquimaux signified "eater of raw fish," but he was also aware the word was in the country considered an insult, so he did not fail to call the inhabitants "Greenlanders."

But, from their oily sealskin clothes, and boots of the same, from their greasy and foul appearance, with no perceptible difference between men and women, it was easy to see what was their usual food; besides, like all people who live on fish, they were subject to leprosy, but they did not seem much the worse for that.

The Lutheran minister and his wife, with whom the doctor had promised himself an interesting conversation, were absent on a

tour towards Proven, to the south of Uppernawik; so he was obliged to confine his attentions to the governor. This chief magistrate did not seem very highly educated, a little less and he would have been an ass, a little more and he would have been able to read.

However, the doctor contrived to question him about the trade habits and manners of the Esquimaux, and he learned, by signs, that the average value of a seal was forty pounds sterling, delivered at Copenhagen; a bear's skin, forty Danish dollars; a blue fox skin, four; and a white fox skin two or three dollars.

To complete his education the doctor wanted very much to visit an Esquimaux hut; there are no bounds to a *savant's* thirst for information; fortunately, the opening into these huts was so small, that, anxious as he was, he could not get in. He had a fortunate escape, for nothing can be more disgusting than that accumulation of things, living and dead, flesh of dead seals, and living Esquimaux, rotten fish, and stinking clothing, which furnish a Greenland hut; not a window to let in the fresh air, and only a hole in the top to let out the smoke, but which affords no escape to the stench.

Foker gave these details to the doctor, who cursed his own obesity all the same. He wanted to judge for himself about these emanations. *Sui generis*, in the long run, gives the worthy Claw-bonny in few words.

During the latter's ethnographical studies, Shandon was occupied, according to his instructions, in procuring the means of transport across the ice; he had to pay four pounds for a sledge and six dogs, and the natives were unwilling to part with them.

Shandon wished also to engage Hans Christian, the skilful dog driver, who was with Captain McClintock's expedition, but Hans happened to be at Vken in southern Greenland.

Then came the great question of the day; would they find a European at Uppernawik waiting for the *Forward's* arrival? Did the governor know whether any foreigner, probably an Englishman, had established himself in these regions? What was the latest date of his relations with whaling ships or others?

To these questions the governor replied that no foreigner had landed on that part of the coast for more than ten months.

Shandon obtained from him the names of the last whalers there; he knew none of them.

"You must allow, doctor," said he, "that there is nothing to be made of this. Nothing at Cape Farewell, nothing at Disco, nothing at Uppernawik!"

"If in a few days, you are able to add, nothing at Melville Bay, my dear Shandon, I shall salute you as sole commander of the *Forward*."

The whale boat returned in the evening to the brig. Strong had obtained several dozens of eider duck's eggs, each twice as large as

a hen's egg and of a greenish colour. It was not much, but it was very refreshing for a crew reduced to a salt meat diet.

The next day the wind was favourable, still Shandon did not get under weigh; he preferred waiting a day longer, and to satisfy his conscience, give any human being time to join the *Forward*, he even caused the sixteen-pounder to be fired every hour, but he only succeeded in terrifying molly mokes and rock patridges. At night he sent up several rockets, but to no purpose—he was obliged to make up his mind to sail. On the 8th of May the *Forward* under plain sail lost sight of the settlement of Uppernawik, and of those hideous poles from which hung seal intestines and paunches of deer.

The wind blew from the south-east, and the temperature rose to thirty-two degrees. The sun was piercing through the fog and the ice was becoming looser in consequence of its heat.

But the reflection of the sun's rays from the ice had a disastrous effect on the eyesight of several of the crew. Wolston the armourer, Gripper, Clifton, and Bell, were attacked with snow blindness, an affection of the eyes which is very common in spring and which produces many cases of blindness among the Esquimaux. The doctor advised those so affected, and even all his companions, to cover the face with a green veil, and he was the first to practise his own prescription.

The dogs bought by Shandon at Uppernawik were rather savage; however, they became accustomed to being on board, and Captain did not quarrel with his new comrades. He seemed to know their habits. Clifton was not the last to make the remark, that Captain had already made acquaintance with his Greenland brethren at some earlier period. The latter, who had been half-starved ashore, only thought of recruiting themselves with the fare they met with on board.

The 9th of May the *Forward* was only a few cables' length distant from the most western of the Baffin Isles. The doctor observed several rocks in the bay between the islands and the land. Those were called Crimson Cliffs; they were covered with snow of a beautiful carmine colour, to which Doctor Kane gave a vegetable origin. Clawbonny wanted to have a closer inspection of this phenomenon, but the ice would not allow any nearer approach to the coast; though the temperature tended to rise it was easy to see that icebergs and ice streams were accumulating to the north part of Baffin's Sea.

After Uppernawik the land offered a different aspect, and they could see the profiles of immense glaciers against the grey sky. On the 10th the *Forward* left Hingston Bay to the right near the seventy-fourth degree of latitude; Lancaster Sound opened into the sea several hundred miles to the west.

But this immense expanse of water was beginning to disappear under vast fields of ice on which hummocks arose regularly as the

crystallization of the same substance. Shandon lighted his fires, and until the 11th of May the *Forward* wound in and out the winding channels, leaving a trace in the sky with her black smoke similar to the course she was following through the water.

Fresh obstacles were not long in presenting themselves; the passes closed up in consequence of the incessant displacement of the mass of floating ice; sometimes there was hardly any water under the *Forward's* bow, and should she become nipped it would be difficult to extricate her. They were all aware of their situation, and gave all their attention to it.

And now some symptoms of hesitation began to be manifest on board this vessel, without any known destination, with no known object in view, but that of a foolish attempt to get northward. Among these men who were accustomed to danger, many forgetful of the advantages offered them, regretted having risked themselves so far. Their minds were already demoralized to a certain extent, which was increased by Clifton's terrors, and the intrigues of two or three leaders such as Pen, Gripper, Warren, and Wolston. Excessive fatigue was also added to the moral uneasiness of the men, for on the 12th of May the brig was entirely closed in; and her steam-power useless. It was necessary to cut a passage through the ice, and the use of the saw was very difficult where the floes were six and seven feet thick. When two parallel cuts about a hundred feet long had been made in the ice they had to break the middle away with axes and handspikes. Then they carried the anchors forward to a hole made with a large augur, and then hauled the ship up to them by the capstan; their greatest difficulty was driving the broken pieces under the floe, to allow the vessel to pass.

What with the labour of the saw, working the capstan, and hard labour with the poles and handspikes, amidst fog, thick snow, and in a comparatively low temperature, attacks of ophthalmia and moral uneasiness, everything contributed to weaken the crew of the *Forward* and react on their imagination.

When sailors have to do with an energetic man, a bold man, with confidence in himself, who knows what he wants, where he is going, and what is his object, the confidence they have in him supports them in spite of themselves; they join heart and hand with their chief, strong with his strength, and calm with his calmness. But on board the brig they felt their commander was not at ease himself, but that he hesitated at this unknown object and destination of the vessel. Notwithstanding the energy of his character, his weakness betrayed itself unconsciously by his changing orders, his uncertain manner of handling his vessel, unseasonable reflections, and by a thousand details which could not escape the observation of the crew.

Besides, Shandon was not the captain of the ship; a sufficient reason for venturing to question his orders; and from discussion to disobedience there is but a short step.

The malcontents soon brought the chief engineer over to

their way of thinking, who, until now, had remained firm to his duty.

On the 16th of May, six days after the *Forward* had reached the ice-floe, Shandon had not got two miles farther north, and they were threatened with being enclosed in the ice till the following season. It was becoming serious.

About eight in the evening Shandon and the doctor, accompanied by the seaman Garry, set out over the ice to try and discover some practicable passage; at three miles from the vessel they succeeded, with great trouble, in ascending an iceberg, which might be three hundred feet high. Their view from thence extended over a heap of desolation, similar to the ruins of a gigantic city, with its obelisks thrown down, its towers demolished, and its palaces levelled, altogether a true representation of chaos. The sun seemed to linger over this broken horizon, and its long oblique rays affording no warmth, as if some heat-absorbing substance had been placed between it and this dismal region.

The sea seemed frozen over as far as the eye could reach.

"How are we to get through?" said the doctor.

"I don't know," replied Shandon, "but we will get through, if I am obliged to employ powder to blast these mountains; I certainly will not be caught by the ice and stay here till next spring, as it happened, however, to the *Fox* in nearly the same place."

"Bah!" said the doctor, "we shall get through—with a little philosophy. You will find out that is worth all machines in the world."

"It must be confessed," Shandon replied, "this year does not present itself very favourably."

"That is not to be disputed, Shandon, and I notice that Baffin's Bay has a tendency to return to the state in which it was before 1817."

"Do you believe, doctor, that it has not always been what it is now?"

"No, my dear Shandon; there are from time to time great breaks up in the ice which philosophers cannot explain; thus, until 1817, this sea was constantly closed, when an immense cataclysm occurred which drove the icebergs into the ocean, the greater number of which grounded on the banks of Newfoundland. From that moment Baffin's Bay was nearly free, and became the rendezvous of numerous whalers."

"Then from that period voyages northward have been more easily performed?"

"Incomparably so; but it has been remarked that for some years the bay has a tendency to fill up again, and threatens to close its waters, perhaps for a long time, to the researches of navigators. The greater the reason, therefore, for us to get as far north as possible. But we are certainly like men who are walking through galleries where they have never been before; with doors incessantly closing after them."

"Would you advise me to return?" asked Shandon, trying to read his real opinion in the doctor's looks.

"I—I never knew how to put one foot behind the other, and were we destined never to return I would still say onward. All I wish to establish is that if we act imprudently we do it with our eyes open."

"And what is your opinion, Garry?" Shandon asked the sailor.

"I, commander, I should go straight on; I think as Dr. Claw-bonny does: besides, you will do what you think best; give your orders, we obey them."

"They don't all talk like you, Garry," replied Shandon; "they are not all disposed to obey. Suppose they refuse to execute my orders?"

"I have given you my opinion, commander, because you asked it; but you are not obliged to act up to it."

Shandon was silent. He examined the horizon attentively, and then, with his two companions, descended to the field of ice.





CHAPTER XI.

THE DEVIL'S THUMB.

DURING the commander's absence the men had taken steps to protect the vessel from the pressure of the ice. Pen, Clifton, Bolter, Gripper; and Simpson were occupied with this laborious work, and the two engineers had to lend their assistance, for when the engine no longer required their attention, they again became sailors, and as such they were liable to be employed in all sorts of service on board.

But this was not done without much discontent.

"I have had enough of it," said Pen; "and if a thaw does not come in three days, then I swear by heaven that I shall strike work."

"Strike work," said Gripper; "you would be much better employed in trying to get back again. Do you think we want to winter here till next year?"

"That would be a dull winter indeed," said Plover, "for the ship is open on every quarter."

"And who knows," said Brunton, "whether the sea will be more open next spring than it is now."

"It is no question of next spring," replied Pen; "this is Thursday; if by Sunday morning the sea is not open, we turn southward again."

"Well said," cried Clifton.

"Does that suit you?" asked Pen.

"It does, it does," answered his comrades.

"And it is right enough too," said Warren, "for if we are to pull our arms off hauling the ship along, my opinion is we had better haul her astern."

"We shall see about that on Sunday," observed Wolston.

"Only give me orders," said Brunton, "my fires will soon be lighted."

"Oh," said Clifton, "we will light them ourselves."

"If any of the officers," resumed Pen, "wish to have the pleasure of passing the winter here, he is free to do so; we will leave him quietly here; he will have no trouble in building himself a snow hut like a true Esquimaux."

"None of that, Pen," said Brunton; "we are not going to leave anybody; do you understand that, you fellows? I believe it will not be difficult to decide the commander to return; he seems to me to be very uneasy already, and if the question is put to him quietly——"

"That remains to be seen," said Plover. "Richard Shandon is sometimes hard and obstinate; he must be sounded very carefully."

"When I think," said Bolton with a sigh, "that in a month we could be back again in Liverpool; we should soon have passed the time of ice to the southward. The passage of Davis Straits will be open by the beginning of June, and we should only have to drift into the Atlantic."

"Without taking into the calculation that in bringing the commander back with us, and acting under his responsibility, our pay and gratifications will be sure; whereas if we went back without him we should be by no means certain of it."

"A very good argument," said Plover; "that fellow Clifton speaks like a paymaster's clerk! We must try and keep clear of the Admiralty authorities; it is much safer. We must leave no one behind."

"But suppose the officers refuse to follow us?" asked Pen, who wanted to drive his comrades into a corner.

They were rather puzzled to answer a question put so directly.

"We shall see to that when the time comes," said Bolton; "it will be quite enough if we bring Richard Shandon to our way of thinking, and I fancy it will not be so very difficult."

"There is one party I am determined to leave behind," said Pen, swearing frightfully, "if it cost me an arm."

"Ah, the dog," observed Plover.

"Yes, that dog. I shall settle his business for him before long."

"I believe," said Clifton, referring to his favourite idea, "that dog is the cause of all our misfortunes."

"He has bewitched us all," said Plover.

"He led us into the ice floe," said Gripper.

"He has brought more ice in our passage than ever was known before at the same time of year."

"He caused my bad eyes," said Brunton.

"And stopped our liquor," added Pen.

"He is the cause of it all," said the men all at once, getting more and more excited.

"Besides," said Clifton, "he is the captain."

"Well, captain of misfortune," cried Pen, whose unreasoning anger was increased by his own words, "you would come here, you shall stay here."

"But how are we to get hold of him?" asked Plover."

"It is a good opportunity now," said Clifton, "the commander is not on board, the lieutenant is asleep in his cabin, the fog is so thick Johnson can't see us——"

"But where's the dog?" asked Pen.

"Captain is now asleep in the coal bunker, and if any one——"

"I'll take charge of him," cried Pen, in a fury.

"Take care, Pen, his teeth can bite an iron bar in two."

"If he moves I will drive this into him," replied Pen, taking his knife in one hand. And he rushed out, followed by Warren, who went to help him.

They soon came back carrying the animal between them, with his legs tied together, and muzzled. They had surprised him in his sleep, and the poor dog could not get loose.

"Hurrah, Pen!" cried Plover.

"And now what are you going to do with him?" asked Clifton.

"Drown him, and if he ever comes back——" replied Pen, with a hideous grin of satisfaction.

There was a seal hole about two hundred yards from the vessel, a sort of circular crack made by the animal's teeth, and always kept open from the interior to the exterior by which the seal was able to come up for air. But he is obliged to be careful, for the arrangement of his teeth would not allow the animal to make the hole from the outside, and in a moment of danger he could not escape his enemies.

Pen and Warren took their way to this hole, and there, in spite of his struggles, the dog was pitilessly dropped into the sea, a large lump of ice was then pushed over the hole, thus closing all exit to the animal walled up in a watery prison.

"A lucky voyage to you, Captain," said the brutal seaman, with a laugh.

Pen and Warren were on board again in a few moments. Johnson had seen nothing of the execution. The fog was thicker than ever round the ship, and it began to snow heavily.

An hour afterwards Shandon, the doctor, and Garry arrived on board the *Forward*.

Shandon had observed a passage in a north-easterly direction,

by which he was resolved to profit. He gave his orders in consequence. The crew were tolerably active in obeying them, as they wished to make Shandon see the impossibility of proceeding any farther, and they still owed him three days' obedience.

During part of the night and the following day the saws were actively employed, and the *Forward* was hauled nearly two miles farther to the north. The 18th they were in sight of land, five or six cables' lengths from a remarkable peak, called from its peculiar shape the Devil's Thumb. At that same spot the *Prince Albert*, in 1851, and the *Advance*, with Kane, 1853, were beset by the ice and frozen in for several weeks.

The strange shape of the Devil's Thumb, the dreary and desolate deserts around, the vast circles of icebergs, some of which were more than three hundred feet high; the cracking of the floes, repeated by echo in an ominous manner, all rendered the *Forward's* position horribly sad. Shandon felt that he must extricate her from it, and advance if possible.

Four and twenty hours afterwards, according to his calculation, he had removed her two miles further from this unpropitious coast. But it was not enough. Shandon began to fear the consequences, and the false position in which he found himself paralyzed his energies. In following out his instructions to get farther north he got his vessel into an extremely perilous position; towing her along had worn his men out. It required more than three hours to cut a channel twenty feet long, where the ice averaged four to five feet in thickness, and the health of the crew was beginning to fail. Shandon was astonished at the men's silence, and their unwonted obedience; but he feared it was but the calm which precedes the storm.

Judge then his bitter disappointment and surprise, his despair indeed, when, in consequence of some imperceptible movement in the icefield, the *Forward* had lost in the night between the 18th and 19th all they had gained at a cost of so much fatigue. On Saturday morning he found himself again opposite the Devil's Thumb, and in a still more critical position. Icebergs were more numerous than ever, and kept passing like phantoms in the fog.

Shandon was totally demoralized. It must be confessed that fear had taken possession of this bold man's heart as well as that of the crew.

Shandon had heard the dog had disappeared, but he did not dare to punish the offenders, he feared to provoke a mutiny.

The weather was horrible the whole of this day; whirlwinds of snow enveloped the *Forward* in an impenetrable cloak; at times the fog was lifted by the wind, and their frightened eyes could see the Devil's Thumb rising like a spectre landward.

The *Forward* once made fast to an immense block of ice, there was nothing more to be done, or attempted. It became darker than

ever, and the man at the wheel could not have seen Wall, who was on the watch forward.

Shandon retired to his cabin, a prey to incessant uneasiness; the doctor was arranging the notes of the voyage; half the crew were on deck, the others in their berths below.

At that moment it blew harder than ever, and the Devil's Thumb seemed to rise larger than ever through the rents in the fog.

"Good God!" cried Simpson, starting back.

"What's that?" cried Foker; and exclamations were heard in all directions.

"It is going to crush us!"

"We are lost!"

"Mr. Wall! Mr. Wall!"

"It is all over with us."

"Commander! commander!"

These cries followed in quick succession from the watch on deck.

Wall rushed to the quarter deck; Shandon, followed by the doctor, hurried on the poop and looked round him.

In the middle of the partly dissipated fog the Devil's Thumb seemed to have suddenly come close to the brig, and to have grown a most fantastic size; on its top rose a second cone reversed and balancing on its point; it seemed to threaten to crush the ship with its enormous weight as it rocked about, ready to fall. It was a frightful sight. Every man drew back instinctively, and several of the men jumped on the ice and abandoned the ship.

"Let no man stir!" cried the commander; "every one to his post."

"Why, my friends, there is no cause for fear," said the doctor, "it is only an effect of mirage! See, commander; see, Mr. Wall, it is nothing else."

"You are right, Dr. Clawbonny," replied Johnson, the boat-swain; "those fools have let themselves be frightened by shadows."

At the doctor's words most of the sailors had returned, and admiration succeeded fear as this marvellous phenomenon faded away.

"They may call that mirage," said Clifton. "Well, the devil has something to do with it, believe me."

"That's certain," replied Gripper.

i When the fog lifted it had disclosed to the commander's eyes a wide, free passage, which he had not even suspected; it was in a direction away from the coast. He resolved to profit by this favourable chance without delay; men were posted on each side of the channel, and they began turning the vessel towards the north.

For several hours this operation was cheerfully, though silently,

carried on; Shandon had ordered the fires to be lighted, to profit by the channel thus discovered so fortunately.

"It was a providential chance," said he, to Johnson, "and if we can only get a few miles ahead perhaps our troubles will be over. Mr. Brunton, fire up; as soon as there is sufficient pressure, let me know. In the meantime our men will gain courage—it is so much gained. They are in a hurry to be at a distance from the Devil's Thumb; we must profit by their good dispositions."

The advance of the brig suddenly stopped.

"What is it, Wall?" said Shandon, "have our tow ropes parted?"

"No, commander," replied Wall, leaning over the rail. "But here are all the men running back, and scrambling on board. They seem terribly frightened."

"What can it be?" cried Shandon, running forward.

"Aboard, aboard!" cried the terrified seamen.

Shandon looked to the north and shuddered in spite of himself.

A strange animal, with his tongue smoking and hanging out of his enormous jaws, was leaping about a cable's length from the ship. It seemed more than twenty feet high; its hair stood on end; it ran after the sailors and stopped at them, while its tail, about ten feet long, swept up the snow in thick whirls. The sight of such a monster froze the blood in the veins of the boldest.

"It is a bear," said one.

"It is the Gevaudan beast!"

"It is the lion of the Apocalypse!"

Shandon ran down to his cabin to fetch his gun, which was always loaded; the doctor seized a weapon, and was ready to fire at the animal, which, from its proportions, recalled antediluvian quadrupeds to his recollection.

It came nearer, making immense springs; Shandon and the doctor both fired at the same moment, and the sudden report of their arms disturbed the atmosphere and produced an unexpected effect.

The doctor looked attentively for a moment, and then burst out laughing.

"Refraction!" cried he.

"Refraction!" cried Shandon.

But just then a cry of terror burst from the crew and interrupted them.

"The dog!" began Clifton.

"The dog—Captain!" repeated his comrades.

"Himself," cried Pen, "back again." In fact it was he who having got loose from the cords round his legs, had returned to the ice field by some other crevice. At that moment the refraction by a phenomenon, common enough in those latitudes, gave him those formidable dimensions, which the concussion of the air had

dissipated; but the alarming effect was none the less upon the sailors, little disposed to admit a purely physical explanation of the fact. The adventures of the Devil's Thumb, the reappearance of the dog under such fantastic circumstances, finished the disorder of their moral condition, and murmurs burst out on all sides.





CHAPTER XII.

CAPTAIN HATTERAS.

THE *Forward* made a rapid passage under steam between ice fields and icebergs. Johnson was at the wheel. Shandon was looking at the horizon through his snow spectacles; but his satisfaction was of short duration, for he soon discovered that the passage was closed by a circle of mountains. However, he preferred the chances of advancing to those of retrograding. The dog followed the brig along the ice, but at some distance. If he remained too far behind, a strange whistle was heard which immediately called him on.

The first time they heard this whistle the sailors looked round; they were alone on deck, and were holding a council; not a stranger was near them, and yet this whistle had been heard several times.

Clifton was the first to be alarmed.

"Do you hear?" said he; "and look how that beast jumps about when he hears the whistle!"

"I can hardly believe it," replied Gripper.

"I have done with him, once for all," replied Pen.

"You are right, Pen," said Brunton; "it is only tempting Providence."

"Tempting the devil, rather," said Clifton. "I would rather lose all my share of the bounty than go a step farther."

"We shall never get home again," said Brunton, disconsolately.

The crew was completely demoralized.

"Not a step farther!" cried Wolston; "is that your opinion?"

"Yes, it is!" cried the sailors.

"Then," said Bolton, "let us go and talk to the commander; I'll be spokesman."

The seamen in a body walked aft to the poop.

The *Forward* was then entering a vast circus which might

measure about eight hundred feet in diameter ; it was completely closed with the exception of the one point of issue, that by which the vessel had come.

Shandon understood at last he had shut himself up in prison. But what was to be done ? How could he retrace his steps ? He felt all his responsibility, and his hand convulsively grasped his telescope.

The doctor was looking on with his arms folded, without saying a word ; he kept his eyes on those icy walls, whose height averaged more than three hundred feet. A dome of fog hung suspended over the gulf.

It was at this moment that Bolton addressed the commander.

"Commander," said he, with considerable emotion, "we can go no farther."

"What do you say ?" replied Shandon, whose sense of outraged discipline made the blood fly to his face.

"We say, commander, that we have done enough for this invisible captain, and we have made up our minds not to go on any farther."

"You have made up your minds ?" cried Shandon. "Is this the way you speak, Bolton ! Take care !"

"It's of no use threatening us," brutally replied Pen ; "we won't go any farther."

Shandon made a step towards the mutinous seamen. At the same time the boatswain came up to him and said in a whisper—

"Commander, if you want to get out of this, we have not a moment to lose ! An iceberg is coming up the passage ; he may stop it up and keep us prisoners !"

Shandon examined their situation.

"You will have to account for your conduct another day, men," said Shandon ; "now then, about ship !"

The sailors hurried to their places ; the *Forward* was soon round and fires up ; they had to make a race of it with the iceberg. The ship was making for the south to get through the passage, and the iceberg was drifting northward, and likely to close it up.

"Fire up ! Brunton, fire up ! Do you hear ?" cried Shandon.

The *Forward* shot on like a bird among the broken ice through which her steel stem cut its way. The action of the screw shook the hull from stem to stern, and the manometer showed a tremendous steam pressure, for it whistled furiously.

"Close the valves !" cried Shandon.

The engineer obeyed, at the risk of blowing up the vessel.

But his despairing efforts were in vain ; the iceberg, caught by some under-current, was rapidly nearing the pass ; the brig was still three cables' length distant, when the iceberg, thrusting itself like a wedge in the interval left open, fastened on to its neighbours and closed the passage.

"We are lost !" cried Shandon, who could not check that imprudent exclamation.

"Lost! lost!" cried the crew.

"Every one for himself?" said one.

"Lower the boats!" said another.

"To the steward's cabin!" cried Pen and some of his adherents; "if we must be drowned, better to be drowned drunk."

Disorder among the crew was at its height, who had broken loose from all control. Shandon felt himself beaten; he tried to give his orders—he stammered—hesitated; he could not put his ideas into words. The doctor walked up and down in a state of agitation. Johnson folded his arms and held his tongue.

All at once a powerful, energetic, commanding voice pronounced these words:—

"Every man to his place! Prepare to go about."

Johnson shuddered, and without knowing whirled the wheel round.

It was time indeed. The brig was just about to dash itself against the walls of its prison.

While Johnson was obeying orders instinctively, Shandon, Clawbonny, and the crew, all, even Warren, the stoker, who had left his fires, and Strong, the black, who had come from the galley, all were assembled on deck, and all saw a man come out of the cabin, of which he alone had the key—this man was Garry, the seaman.

"Sir!" cried Shandon, growing pale; "Garry—you—what right have you to give orders here?"

"Duke!" cried Garry, with the same whistle which had so much puzzled the crew already.

The dog hearing his proper name jumped on the poop, and went and lay down at his master's feet.

The crew said not a word. The key which the captain alone could have, this dog which he had sent on board, and which thus proved his identity, and that tone of command, about which there could be no mistake, all acted powerfully on the minds of the sailors, and was sufficient to establish Garry's authority.

Besides Garry was no longer recognizable. He had removed the long whiskers which covered his face, and his expression was still more energetic and authoritative. Wearing the clothes belonging to his rank, which had been left in the cabin, he appeared to them in the uniform of their captain.

With their natural fickleness the crew began to shout.

"Hurrah! Hurrah! for the captain!"

"Shandon!" said the latter to his chief officer, "muster the men; I wish to inspect them."

Shandon obeyed, and gave his orders in an altered tone. The captain stepped forward in front of his officers and men, saying something *à-propos* to each, and treating them according to their past conduct. When he had finished his inspection, he mounted the poop, and then spoke the following terms in a calm tone of voice:—

"Officers and men, I am an Englishman like yourselves, and my

motto is, like Nelson's, 'England expects every man to do his duty.' As an Englishman I am determined, and we are determined, that bolder men shall not go where we have not gone. As Englishmen, we will not allow others to have the glory of getting farther north. If ever the foot of man is to press the soil of the North Pole, it shall be that of an Englishman. Here is the flag of our country. I have fitted this vessel out, I have devoted my fortune to this enterprise, I will devote to it my life and yours, but this flag must fly from the world's North Pole. Trust to me. A sum of one thousand pounds shall be your due for every degree we make farther to the north. Now we are at the seventy-second—there are ninety. Count them. Besides, my name will answer for me. It signifies energy and patriotism. I am Captain Hatteras!"

"Captain Hatteras!" cried Shandon, and that name, well known to English seamen, was repeated in whispers among the crew.

"Now," Hatteras went on, "make the brig fast to the ice, put out the fires, and let every man go to his work. Shandon, I wish to have some conversation with you respecting affairs on board. Come to my cabin with the doctor, Wall, and the boatswain, Johnson, pipe down."

Hatteras calmly and coolly left the poop, while Shandon was anchoring the brig.

Who was this Hatteras, and why did his name have so much effect on the crew?

John Hatteras was the son of a London brewer, who died in 1852, worth six millions sterling. While very young he took to a seafaring life, notwithstanding the brilliant fortune awaiting him; not that he had any vocation for trade or commerce, but he had an instinctive taste for geographical discovery; his dream was to plant his foot where no one had ever been before.

When he was twenty he already possessed that vigour of constitution common to lean and sanguine men, an energetic countenance with regular features, a high forehead, good but cold eyes, thin lips, forming a mouth economical of words; of middle height, with limbs and muscles of iron, constituting altogether a man with a temperament equal to anything. To look at him you felt he was a bold man; to hear him a cold and decided one; he was one of those that never draw back, and ready to risk other men's lives as readily as his own. It was quite advisable to think twice before following him in his enterprises.

John Hatteras carried the national pride to a very high degree, and it was he that made this proud reply to a Frenchman who, out of civility, had said one day in his presence—

"If I was not a Frenchman, I should like to be an Englishman."

To which Hatteras replied—

"If I was not an Englishman, I should wish to be an Englishman."

You can judge what the man was by this answer.

His great desire was to keep up the monopoly of his countrymen for all geographical discovery ; but to his great disappointment they had done but little in the field of discovery during the preceding ages.

America was due to the Genoese, Christopher Columbus ; India to the Portuguese, Vasco di Gama ; China to the Portuguese, Ferdinand d'Andrada ; Terra del Fuego to the Portuguese, Magellan ; a Frenchman, Jacques Cartier, discovered Canada, while Labrador, Brazil, the Cape of Good Hope, the Sunda Isles, the Azores, Madeira, Newfoundland, Guinea, Congo, Mexico, Cape Blanco, Greenland, Iceland, the South Sea, California, Japan, Cambodia, Pera, Kamschatka, the Philippine Isles, Spitzbergen, Cape Horn, Behring's Straits, Tasmania, New Zealand, New Brittany, New Holland, Louisiana, Jean Mayen Island, were all discovered by Icelanders, Scandinavians, Russians, Portuguese, Danes, Spaniards, Genoese, and Dutchmen ; but not one Englishman figured amongst them, and it was a source of despair to Hatteras to see his countrymen excluded from the glorious band of navigators who made the great discoveries of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Hatteras consoled himself somewhat by referring to more modern times. The English had their turn with Sturt, Dugald Stuart, Burke, Wills, King, and Gray, in Australia, Palliser, in America, Cyril Graham, and Waddington Cunningham in India, and with Burton, Speke, Grant, and Livingstone, in Africa.

But that was not enough for Hatteras, these bold travellers were rather improvers than discoverers ; something more was requisite. and Hatteras would have invented a country to have the honour of discovering it.

Now he had remarked that if the English did not form a majority among ancient discoverers, and even they had to go back to Cook for New Caledonia in 1774, and the Sandwich Islands, where he perished, in 1778, there existed still one quarter of the globe where they seemed to have united all their efforts ; and this was precisely the Arctic seas, and lands of Northern America.

The list of Polar discoveries may be arranged thus :—

Nova Zembla, discovered by Willoughby, in 1553 ; Weigatz Island, by Barrow, in 1556 ; the West coast of Greenland, by Davis, in 1585 ; Davis' Straits, by the same, in 1587 ; Spitzbergen, by Willoughby, in 1596 ; Hudson's Bay, by Hudson, in 1610 ; Baffin's Bay, by Baffin, in 1616.

Of later years, Hearne, Mackenzie, John Ross, Parry, Franklin, Richardson, Beechey, James Ross, Back, Dease, Simpson, Rae, Inglefield, Belcher, Austin, Kellet, Moore, McClure, Kennedy, McClintock, have been continually pushing their researches into this unknown land.

It was all very well to have fixed the limits of Northern America, and almost discovered the North-west Passage, but that was not enough ; there was something better still to be done, and that had

been twice attempted by John Hatteras, by fitting out two ships at his own expense; he wanted to reach the pole itself, and thus crown the series of English discoveries by a most brilliant attempt. To reach the pole was the object of his life.

After having made several successful voyages in the South Seas, Hatteras endeavoured for the first time to reach the north by Baffin's Bay; but he could get no farther than the seventy-fourth degree of latitude; he then commanded the *Halifax* sloop; his crew suffered terribly, and John Hatteras had pushed his temerity so far that in future sailors were not to be tempted to recommence similar expeditions under such a leader.

Still, in 1850, Hatteras succeeded in entering twenty determined fellows on board the schooner the *Farewell*, principally attracted by the high pay offered for their services.

It was on that occasion that Doctor Clawbonny entered into a correspondence with John Hatteras, to whom he was unknown, offering to take part in the expedition; but fortunately for the doctor the post was no longer vacant.

The *Farewell*, following the course taken by the *Neptune*, of Aberdeen, in 1817, reached the north of Spitzbergen as far as the seventy-sixth degree of latitude. There they were obliged to winter; but their sufferings were so great, and the cold so intense, that not one of the crew saw England again, with the sole exception of Hatteras himself, who was brought back by a Danish whaler, after walking more than two hundred miles across the ice.

The sensation produced by the return of this one man was immense. Who, for the future, would ever follow Hatteras in his mad attempts? Still he did not give up the idea of another attempt. His father, the brewer, died, and he became the possessor of a colossal fortune.

About this time a geographical fact occurred which struck Hatteras very sensibly. A brig called the *Advance*, fitted out by a merchant named Grinnel, commanded by Doctor Kane, and sent to look for Sir John Franklin, reached in 1853, by Baffin's Bay, and Smith's Straits, beyond the eighty-second degree of latitude north, nearer the pole than any of his predecessors.

Now this was an American ship, Grinnel was an American and Kane was an American.

It can be easily understood how the Englishman's contempt for the Yankee was turned into hatred in the heart of Hatteras. He determined to outdo his audacious competitor at any cost, and reach the pole itself. For two years he had been living incognito at Liverpool. He passed for a sailor. He saw in Richard Shandon the man he wanted. He sent him an anonymous letter, making him his offers, and the same to Doctor Clawbonny. The *Forward* was built, manned, and equipped. Hatteras took good care not to let his name be known. He would not have found a single man to sail with him. He had decided not to take the command of the brig

except under very pressing circumstances, and when the crew were so far advanced that it would be too late for them to draw back. He had also, as has been seen, the power of making such pecuniary offers to his men that not one would refuse to follow him to the end of the world.

It was indeed to the end of the world that they were going. Now the situation having become critical, Hatteras could no hesitate to make himself known.

His dog, his faithful Duke, the companion of his wanderings, was the first to recognize him, and, fortunately for the brave and unfortunately for the timid, it was well and duly established that the captain of the *Forward* was John Hatteras.





CHAPTER XIII.

THE PROJECTS OF HATTERAS.

THE appearance of this bold personage was appreciated variously by the crew; some took his side completely, either from love of money, or attracted by his daring; others took their share in the adventure, but reserved to themselves the right of protesting at some future occasion; besides, it seemed actually very difficult to resist such a man. Every one then returned to his duty. The 20th of May was a Sunday, and a day of rest for the crew.

A council of officers was held in the captain's cabin; it consisted of Hatteras, Shandon, Wall, Johnson, and the doctor.

"Gentlemen," said the captain, in that soft, and, at the same time, imperious voice, which characterized him, "you are aware it is my intention to go to the North Pole. I wish to know your opinion of this undertaking; what do you think of it, Shandon?"

"My duty is not to think, but to obey," replied Shandon, coldly. Hatteras was not surprised at this answer.

"Richard Shandon," he repeated, no less coldly, "I beg you to give me your opinion on our chances of success."

"Well, captain, facts answer for me. All attempts of this sort have hitherto failed. I hope we may be more fortunate."

"We shall. And you, gentlemen, what do you think?"

"For my part," replied the doctor, "I think your intention practicable, captain, and as it is evident that some day or other some navigator is bound to reach this North Pole, I do not see why it should not be ours to do it."

"And there are reasons why it should be ours," replied Hatteras, "for we have taken measures accordingly, and we shall profit by the experience of our predecessors. And here I must thank you heartily, Shandon, for the care and attention you have bestowed on the fitting out of the vessel. We have a few bad hands among

the men, but I shall soon bring them to their senses. Altogether I have but praise to give you."

Shandon bowed coldly. His position on board the *Forward*, which he had hoped to command, was a false one. Hatteras saw it, and did not press him further.

"As for you, gentlemen," he resumed, addressing himself to Wall and Johnson, "I could not have the assistance of officers more distinguished for courage and experience."

"Well, captain, I am your man," replied Johnson; "and though I think your enterprise rather a rash one, you may reckon on me to the end."

"And on me, too," said Wall.

"As for you, doctor, I know what you are worth."

"Then you know more than I do," said the doctor, quickly.

"Now, gentlemen," continued Hatteras, "it is fit you should know on what irrefutable arguments my pretension to reach the pole is founded. In 1817, the *Neptune*, of Aberdeen, reached to the north of Spitzbergen, as far as the eighty-second degree. In 1826, the celebrated Parry, after his third journey to the polar seas, also left Spitzbergen point, and with boats on sledges got as far as a hundred and fifty miles north. In 1852 Captain Inglefield penetrated to Smith's inlet as far as seventy-eight degrees thirty-five minutes of latitude. All these vessels were English, and commanded by our countrymen."

Here Hatteras paused.

"I must add," he continued, in a constrained tone, as if the words would hardly leave his lips, "I must add that, in 1854, the American, Kane, commanding the brig *Advance*, reached a still higher point, and his lieutenant, Morton, having made a march across the ice-fields, gave the United States ensign to the winds beyond the eighty-fourth degree. Having said so much, I shall not refer to it again. Now, what we want to know is, what the captains of the *Neptune*, *Enterprise*, *Isabella*, and *Advance*, ascertained, viz., that proceeding from these high latitudes there exists a polar basin entirely free from ice."

"Free from ice!" cried Shandon, interrupting the captain; "that is impossible."

"You must observe, Shandon," quietly replied Hatteras, whose eye glittered for a moment, "that I give you names and facts in support of it. I would add, that while Captain Penny was stationed, in 1851, along the Wellington Channel, his lieutenant, Stewart, found an open sea before him, and this peculiarity was confirmed when Sir Edward Beecher wintered, in 1853, in Northumberland Bay, in seventy-six degrees fifty minutes of longitude; these reports are undeniable, and we must be very ill-disposed not to admit them."

"Still, captain," said Shandon, "these facts are, in themselves, so contradictory."

"You are in error, Shandon," cried Doctor Clawbonny; "these facts do not contradict any scientific assertion; the captain will allow me to tell you so."

"Well, Shandon," said Hatteras, "put the two cases; either the sea is free from ice or it is not, and there is nothing in these two suppositions to prevent our reaching the pole. If the sea is open the *Forward* will convey us thither without trouble; if it is frozen over we will make the attempt with our sledges. You will agree with me, there is nothing impracticable in that. If we can only reach the ninety-third degree in the brig we shall only have to go six hundred miles to reach the pole."

"And what are six hundred miles," cried the doctor, hastily, "when it is well-known that a Cossack, named Alexir Markoff, went along the frozen sea along the northern coast of the Russian empire, in sledges drawn by dogs, a distance of eight hundred miles in twenty-four days."

"Do you hear that, Shandon?" replied Hatteras; "and tell me if an Englishman cannot do what a Cossack has done?"

"Surely he can," cried the doctor, impetuously.

"To be sure he can," added the boatswain.

"Well, Shandon?" asked the captain.

"Captain," coldly answered Shandon, "I can only repeat my former words. I shall obey your orders."

"Well, now," resumed Hatteras, "let us consider our present position; we are beset by ice, and it seems impossible for us to get to Smith's Straits this year. Now, this is what we had better do."

Hatteras unfolded one of those excellent charts published by order of the Admiralty, in 1859.

"Be so good as to follow me," said he. "If Smith's Straits are closed to us, it is not the case with Lancaster Sound, to the west of Baffin's Bay; according to my idea we ought to ascend this strait to that of Barrow, and thence to Beechey Island. That course has been taken a hundred times by sailing vessels; we shall have no trouble in doing it in a screw steamer. Once at Beechey Island we can follow Wellington Channel as far as possible to the north, up to the outlet of the creek; we will keep up the communication between Wellington Channel and Queen's Channel, at the very spot where open sea was visible. Now this is only the 20th of May; in a month, under favourable circumstances, we shall have reached that point, and thence we can shape our course to the pole. What do you think of it, gentlemen?"

"That is evidently the only route we can take," replied Johnson.

"And we will take it to-morrow. We will rest ourselves this day, being Sunday. Shandon, you will see that the Bible is read as usual; these religious exercises have a salutary effect on men's minds, and a sailor, above all, ought to put his trust in God."

"Very good, captain," said Shandon, who left the cabin with the third officer and the boatswain.

"Doctor," said John Hatteras, pointing to Shandon, "there is a man, whose wounded vanity has been his destruction. I can no longer rely on him."

The next day the captain ordered the long boat to be lowered. He went to reconnoitre the icebergs in the basin, the largest of which did not exceed two hundred yards. He also noticed that by slow pressure of the ice the basin itself seemed to narrow; it was, therefore, urgent to make a breach in the ice, that the ship might not be crushed in this mountainous vice. One could easily see John Hatteras was a man of energy by the means he employed.

He first of all made them cut steps in the wall of ice, and he thus reached the summit of the iceberg; from thence he saw that it would not be difficult to force his way to the south-west. He ordered a mine to be made in the centre of the iceberg; this work, which was carried out expeditiously, was finished in the course of Monday. Hatteras could not reckon on his blasting cylinders of eight or ten pounds of powder, their action would have been naught against such a mass; they were only of use to break up the surface of an ice-field; he therefore placed a thousand pounds of powder in the mine, having carefully calculated its explosive direction. This mine was provided with a long match covered with gutta percha, and led to the exterior. The gallery leading to the mine was filled with snow and ice which the cold of the following night rendered as hard as granite. The temperature, under the influence of the easterly wind, went down to twelve degrees.

The next day the *Forward* got up her steam ready to profit by the smallest chance of getting out. Johnson was ordered to light the match which had been calculated to burn for half an hour before reaching the powder. Thus he had sufficient time to get on board again; in fact ten minutes after having carried out the captain's orders he was at his post.

The crew were all on deck; the weather was dry and clear; snow had ceased to fall. Hatteras, on the poop with the doctor, was counting the minutes by his chronometer.

At thirty-five minutes past eight; a dull explosion was heard; the report was much less loud than they expected. The outline of the iceberg was suddenly changed, as in an earthquake. A thick white smoke rose into the sky to a considerable height; and long crevices streaked the iceberg's sides, the upper part of which was flung to a distance, and fell in fragments round the *Forward*.

But the passage was not yet open; enormous blocks of ice, supported by the adjacent icebergs, remained suspended in the air, and it was to be feared that in their fall they might close the pass again.

Hatteras saw their situation at a glance.

He called to Wolston and ordered him to double load the gun forward, and ram it down as tightly as possible.

"Are you going to attack the iceberg with power and shot?" asked the doctor.

"No," replied Hatteras, "that would be useless; no ball, but a triple charge of powder. Wolston, be quick."

The piece was soon loaded.

"What can he be going to do without ball?" said Shandon, between his teeth.

"You will soon see," said the doctor.

"All ready, captain," cried Wolston.

"All right," replied Hatteras; "Brunton, a few turns ahead."

The screw began to turn; the *Forward* drew nearer the berg which had been mined.

"Aim at the passage," cried the captain to the gunner.

The latter obeyed. When the brig was about half a cable's length distant, Hatteras called out, "Fire." A loud report followed the order, and blocks of ice, shaken by the atmospheric vibration, fell into the sea.

"Full speed on, Brunton," cried Hatteras; "straight to the passage, Johnson."

Johnson was at the wheel, the brig rushed through the foaming waves along the open passage. It was just in time, the *Forward* was hardly clear before it closed up behind her.

It was an anxious moment, and there was but one heart which was firm and unmoved on board, and that heart was the captain's.





CHAPTER XIV.

EXPEDITION IN SEARCH OF FRANKLIN.

ON Wednesday, the 23rd of May, the *Forward* resumed her adventurous navigation, tacking among the packs and icebergs, thanks to steam, this obedient power which had been wanting to so many navigators in the polar seas. The temperature began to rise. The thermometer at six in the morning stood at twenty-six degrees, and at midnight at twenty-five. The wind blew lightly from the south-east. On Thursday, at two in the morning, the *Forward* arrived in sight of Possession Bay, on the American coast, at the entrance to Lancaster Sound; Cape Burney was soon seen. Some Esquimaux paddled towards the *Forward*, but Hatteras had no time to wait for them.

Byam Martin Peaks, overlooking Cape Liverpool, were passed on the left and soon lost in the evening mist, which also prevented their sighting Cape Hay, the point of which lies low and is easily confounded with the ice on the coast, a circumstance which renders the hydrography of the polar seas often very difficult.

Puffins, ducks and white gulls were seen in great numbers. The latitude, by observation, gave seventy-four degrees one minute, and the longitude, by chronometer, seventy-seven degrees fifteen minutes. The two mountains, Catherine and Elizabeth, were raising their white tops above the clouds.

On Friday at six, Cape Warrender was passed on the right of the strait, and on the left Admiralty Inlet, a bay hitherto imperfectly explored by navigators who are hurrying to the westward. The sea

was high, and the waves often washed over the brig's deck, leaving there lumps of ice.

The north shore presented a curious appearance, with its high table land almost level, reflecting the rays of the sun.

Hatteras would have wished to coast along the north shore in order to reach Beechey Island and the entrance to Wellington Channel all the sooner, but a long continuous ice floe obliged him to his great regret to follow the southern passage.

It was for this reason that on the 26th of May, in the midst of fog and snow, the *Forward* found herself abreast of Cape York, a very lofty mountain, almost perpendicular, caused it to be recognized; the weather having mended a little, the sun shone out for a moment at mid-day and allowed them to get a good observation; seventy-four degrees four minutes of latitude, and eighty-four degrees twenty-three of longitude. Thus the *Forward* was at the extreme end of Lancaster Sound.

Hatteras pointed out to the doctor on his charts the course taken and to take. The brig's position at that moment was very interesting.

"I should have wished," said he, "to find myself farther to the north, but one cannot do the impossible; look, here is our exact position."

The captain marked a spot, little distant from Cape York, on the chart.

"We are now in the middle of this open space, exposed to every wind that blows, formed by the outlets of Lancaster Sound, Barrow's Straits, Wellington Channel, and Regent's Passage; it is at this point that all navigators of seas have necessarily arrived."

"Well," observed the doctor, "that ought to have been rather perplexing for them; there are here four cross roads, indeed, with no sign posts that I can see to point out the right road. How then did Parry, Ross, and Franklin contrive to find their way?"

"They did not contrive at all, doctor, they were obliged to act according to circumstances; sometimes Barrow's Straits were closed to one, and the following year open to another; sometimes the vessel was irresistibly drawn into Regent's Passage. The result of all this is that by force of circumstances they finished by getting to know their way in these complicated seas."

"What a strange land!" said the doctor, consulting the chart again. "How it is all dissected into little bits, without any order or reason! It would seem that the land near the pole has been thus cut up in order to make the approach to it as difficult as possible, while in the other hemisphere it terminates quietly in narrowed points like Cape Horn, the Cape of Good Hope, and the Indian Peninsula. Has the greater rapidity of the equator thus modified matters, while the farthest land, still soft from the first date of creation, has been unable to become firm and united from want of revolving with sufficient velocity?"

"That may be the case, for there is a good reason for everything here below, and nothing has been done without motives which the Almighty sometimes reveals to the wise men of the earth; therefore, doctor, you may avail yourself of the permission."

"I am unfortunately compelled to be discreet, captain. But what a frightful wind there is here," added the doctor, wrapping himself up in his coats as well as he could.

"Yes, the breeze from the north is very strong; and what is worse, it drives us out of our course."

"But it ought to force the ice towards the south, and leave the passage free."

"Yes, it ought, but the wind does not always do what is expected from it. See here, this ice floe seems impassable. Still, we shall try to reach Griffith Island, then coast along Cornwallis Island as far as the Queen's Channel, without passing through Wellington Channel. But I must touch at Beechey Island, to renew my stock of coal."

"How so?" asked the doctor in astonishment.

"Because, according to orders from the Admiralty, great stores of coal have been left at that island for the use of future expeditions, and though Captain McClintock supplied himself there in August, 1859, I assure you there still remains enough for us."

"The truth is," said the doctor, "these regions have been explored for the last fifteen years, and till the day when certain proofs of Franklin's loss arrived the Admiralty always kept five or six ships in these seas. If I am not mistaken, Griffith Island, which I see on the chart almost in the middle of these cross-ways, is become the general rendezvous for navigators."

"True, doctor; and Franklin's unfortunate expedition has resulted in making us more acquainted with these distant lands."

"Just so, captain, for there have been numerous expeditions since 1845. It was not until 1848 that we began to be uneasy about the disappearance of the *Erebus* and the *Terror*, Franklin's two ships. Then his old friend, Dr. Richardson, at the age of seventy, was seen hastening off to Canada, and ascending the Coppermine river as far as the polar sea; while Sir James Ross, in command of the *Investigator* and the *Enterprise*, left Uppernawik in 1848 and arrived at Cape York, where we now are. Every day he sent a barrel adrift containing documents to make his position known; in the fogs he fired his guns; at night he sent up rockets and burnt blue lights, and kept always under easy sail. At last he wintered at Port Leopold from 1848 to 1849; there he caught a quantity of white foxes, rivetted copper collars round their necks, on which were engraved notices of the position of the ships, and the depots of stores, and then he let them loose again in all directions. In the spring he began to visit the coasts of North Somerset in sledges, amidst dangers and privations which made almost all his men ill, or crippled them for life, building cairns, in which copper tubes were enclosed,

containing information necessary to rally the lost expedition. During his absence Lieutenant McClure had explored, without success, the northern shores of Barrow's Straits. It is a remarkable fact, captain, that Sir James Ross had two officers under his command who were destined to become celebrated in later days, McClure, who made the North-west Passage, and McClintock, who discovered Franklin's remains."

"Both good and gallant captains now, two brave Englishmen. Go on, doctor, with the history of these seas, which you seem to know so well; there is always something to be learned from the recital of these bold attempts."

"To conclude with Sir James Ross, I will add that he tried to reach Melville Island more to the west; but he nearly lost his ships, and, beset by ice, he was forced back as far as Baffin's Bay."

"Forced back," said Hatteras, frowning, "against his will."

"He had discovered nothing," resumed the doctor; "it was from this year, 1850, that English vessels never ceased cruising in these waters, and a reward of twenty thousand pounds was offered to any one who should discover the crews of the *Erebus* and the *Terror*. In 1848 Captains Kellet and Moore, commanding the *Herald* and the *Plover*, attempted to penetrate by Behring's Straits. I should add that during the years 1850 and 1851 Captain Austin wintered at Cornwallis Island, Captain Penny, in the *Assistance*, with the *Resolute*, explored Wellington Channel; old Sir John Ross, the hero of the Magnetic Pole, set off again in his yacht, the *Felix*, to the assistance of his old friend; the *Prince Albert* brig made her first voyage at Lady Franklin's expense, and lastly, two American vessels, sent out by Grinnel, with Captain Haven, were carried through Wellington Channel and cast back into Lancaster Sound. It was during this year that McClintock, then a lieutenant under Captain Austin, got as far as Melville Island and Cape Dundas, the extreme points reached by Parry in 1819, where he found at Beechey Island traces that Franklin had wintered there in 1845."

"Yes," observed Hatteras, "three of his men were buried there, three of the weakest of the party."

"From 1851 to 1852," continued the doctor, with a nod of approval to Hatteras, "we see the *Prince Albert* undertaking a second voyage with Lieutenant Bellot; he winters at Batty's Bay in Prince Regent Straits, explores the south-west coast of Somerset, and surveys the coast as far as Cape Walker. During this time the *Enterprise* and the *Investigator* have returned to England, been commissioned by Collinson and McClure, and have rejoined Kellet and Moore at Behring's Straits; while Collinson returned to winter at Hong-Kong, McClure made his way forward, and, after wintering out from 1851 to 1853, he discovered the North-west Passage, but learned nothing of Franklin."

"From 1852 to 1853 a new expedition was arranged of three sailing ships; the *Assistance*, the *Resolute*, the *North Star*, and two steamers, the *Pioneer* and the *Intrepid*. They sailed under the command of Sir Edward Belcher, with Captain Kellet as second. Sir Edward visited Wellington Channel, wintered in Northumberland Bay, and explored the coast, while Kellet, pushing as far as Iridport, in Melville Island, unsuccessfully explored that part of the Arctic regions. But at that time a report arrived in England that two abandoned vessels had been seen not far from the coast of New Caledonia. Lady Franklin immediately chartered the small screw steamer *Isabella*, and Captain Inglefield, after going up Baffin's Bay as far as Victoria Point to the eightieth parallel, returned to Beechey Island without success.

"At the beginning of 1855, Grinnel, the American, went to the expense of a fresh expedition, and Doctor Kane, in endeavouring to reach the pole —"

"Which he could not do!" cried Hatteras, violently excited; "and God be thanked for it. What he did not do, we will!"

"I know it, captain, and if I mention it, it is because this expedition is closely connected with the search after Franklin. Besides, it had no results whatever. I had nearly omitted to state that the Admiralty, considering Beechey Island as the general rendezvous of all expeditions, sent the steamer *Phoenix*, Captain Inglefield, thither with provisions. He sailed with Lieutenant Bellot, and lost that brave officer, who had offered his services a second time to England. We can have a very detailed account of that catastrophe, for our boatswain Johnson was an eye-witness of it."

"Lieutenant Bellot was a brave Frenchman," said Hatteras, "and his memory is held in honour in England."

"Then," continued the doctor, "the vessels belonging to Sir Edward Belcher's squadron began to return one after the other; not all of them, for Sir Edward had been obliged to abandon the *Assistance* in 1854, as McClure had done with the *Investigator* in 1853. About the same time Doctor Rae, in a letter dated July 29th, 1854, from Repulse Bay, which he had reached from America, gave information that the Esquimaux of King William's Land were in possession of several articles which had belonged to the *Erebus* and the *Terror*. There was then no longer any possible doubt as to the fate of the expedition. The *Phoenix*, the *North Star*, and Collinson's vessel returned to England, and there was no longer any British ship in Arctic waters. But though the Government seemed to have lost all hope, Lady Franklin hoped on still, and with the remains of her fortune she fitted out the *Fox*, under the command of McClintock; he set out in 1857, wintered in the place where you made yourself known to us, captain, reached Beechey Island August 11th, 1858, wintered a second time in Bellot's Straits, resumed his research in February, 1859; and May 6th, discovered the

document which left no doubt as to the fate of the *Erebus* and the *Terror*, and returned to England at the end of that year. This is all that has occurred for the last fifteen years in these fatal countries; and, since the return of the *Fox*, not one has returned to tempt fortune in the midst of these dangerous seas."

"Well," replied Hatteras, "we will tempt her."





CHAPTER XV.

DRIVEN SOUTHWARD.

TOWARDS evening the weather was fine, and land was easily distinguishable between Cape Sepping and Cape Clarence, first in the east and then south, and which is joined to the west by a low spit of land. The sea was clear of ice at the entrance to Regent's Straits, but as if determined to bar the *Forward's* course northward, there was an impenetrable field of ice beyond Port Leopold.

Hatteras was very much disappointed, though he did not betray it; he had recourse again to blasting to force the entrance into Port Leopold; he succeeded at mid-day on Sunday, May 27th. The brig was securely made fast to two icebergs, which were as firm, as hard, and as solid as the rocks themselves.

The captain, followed by the doctor, Johnson, and his dog Duke, sprang on the ice, and were soon on the shore. Duke capered about for joy; indeed, since the captain had taken up his proper position, he had become very sociable, keeping up his aversion to certain of the crew, for whom his master had no greater affection than he.

The port was no longer closed by the ice which the east wind generally accumulates; the snow-covered summits of the hills showed themselves beyond.

The house and the lantern, constructed by Sir James Ross, were still in a tolerable state of preservation; but the provisions seemed to have been ransacked by the foxes, and even the bears, of which they saw the tracks still fresh; the hand of man too had been no stranger to these acts of devastation, for there were the remains of Esquimaux huts at the edge of the bay.

The six graves, containing the remains of six seamen belonging to the *Enterprise* and *Investigator*, were recognizable by a slight

swelling of the ground ; they had been respected both by men and animals.

The doctor felt much moved in setting foot for the first time on Arctic soil. It is not possible to imagine one's sensations at the sight of these remains of houses, tents, huts, and magazines, which nature so wonderfully preserves in a cold country.

"There," said he, to his companions, "look at that residence; which Sir James Ross himself named the Camp of Refuge ! If Franklin's expedition could have reached this place it would have been saved. There is the engine itself abandoned here, and the stove at which the crew of the *Prince Albert* warmed themselves in 1851; the things have remained just as they were, and one would think that Kennedy, her captain, had left this hospitable port only yesterday. Here is the boat which sheltered him and his men for some days, for Kennedy, separated from his ship, was really saved by Bellot, who braved the October temperature to rescue him."

"I knew that brave and worthy officer," said Johnson.

While the doctor was looking after the relics of preceding wintering parties, Hatteras occupied himself in collecting provisions and fuel, which were only found in very small quantities. They employed the whole of the next day in getting them on board.

The doctor visited the country without going too far from the ship, and sketched what was most remarkable. The temperature began to rise, and the snow to melt. The doctor made a collection of northern birds, and he saw several seals, which had come to the surface of the ice to breathe, but he did not succeed in shooting one. In his excursions he discovered a high-water mark stone, on which the following characters had been cut—

(E. I.)

1849.

which indicated the passage of the *Enterprise* and the *Investigator*. He pushed on as far as Cape Clarence, the same spot where John and James Ross had waited so impatiently for the break-up of the ice in 1833. The earth was strewn with bones and skulls of animals, and there were still traces of Esquimaux habitations.

The doctor wished to set up a cairn at Port Leopold, and leave a letter there mentioning the passage of the *Forward*, and the object of the expedition. But Hatteras would not allow it; he wished to leave no traces behind him by which a rival could profit. Notwithstanding his excellent reasons, the doctor was obliged to give way to the captain's wishes. Shandon was not the last to blame this obstinacy, for in case of accident, no vessel would know where to go to the assistance of the *Forward*.

Hatteras was deaf to these arguments. His loading was finished on Monday evening, and he again tried to get to the north by forcing a passage through the floe; but after several risks he was obliged

to resign himself to going down Regent's Straits again; he would not remain at Port Leopold, for though it was open to-day it might be closed to-morrow by some unexpected displacement of the ice, a phenomenon which is very frequent in these seas, and against which all navigators ought to be on their guard.

If Hatteras did not allow his uneasiness to betray itself, he felt it, nevertheless, inwardly. He wanted to get to the north, and found himself driven southward!

Where could he get to in that case? Would he be forced back to Victoria harbour, in the Gulf of Boothia, where Sir John Ross wintered in 1833? Would he find Bellot's Straits open at that time, and, rounding North Somerset, would he get north again through Peel's Straits? Or would he find himself beset for several winters like his predecessors, and obliged to exhaust both his strength and his supplies?

Fears of these misfortunes fermented in his head; but he was obliged to decide on what he would do; he went about, and steered south.

The width of Prince Regent's Channel is about the same from Port Leopold to Adelaide Bay. The *Forward* steamed along through the ice, more fortunate than the ships which had preceded her, the greater number of which had required a month to get through this channel, even at a better time of year; it is true that none of these vessels, except the *Fox*, had steam at their command, and had to submit to uncertain, and often adverse, winds.

The crew seemed generally delighted to quit these icy regions; they seemed to have very little taste for the project of reaching the pole; they were easily frightened at Hatteras's resolution, his reputation for boldness having in itself nothing to reassure them. Hatteras tried to profit by every chance of getting forward, whatever would be the consequence, but in the Arctic seas it is all very well to advance, but one's position must be assured, and no risk ought to be run of losing it.

The *Forward* continued steaming ahead; her long line of black smoke clung to the dazzling points of the iceberg's tops. The weather was continually changing, passing from dry and cold to fog and snow. As the brig drew very little water she was able to keep pretty near the land on the west shore; Hatteras was anxious not to miss the entrance to Bellot's Straits, for the Gulf of Boothia has no other outlet to the south but the imperfectly-known Strait of the *Fury* and *Hecla*; this gulf would then afford him no egress if Bellot's Straits were missed, or became impassable.

The doctor, and Johnson the boatswain, were perhaps the only ones who took any interest in these dreary localities.

Hatteras was always poring over his maps and charts, and spoke but little; his taciturnity increased the farther his vessel went southward; he often ascended the poop and remained for

hours, with fixed eyes and folded arms, gazing at the horizon. His orders, when he gave any, were brief and harsh. Shandon observed a chilly silence, and little by little he had kept himself so much aloof that the only relations he had with Hatteras were on matters connected with the service. Wall remained devoted to Shandon, and modelled his own conduct by his. The rest of the crew waited what might turn up, ready to take what advantage they could of it. There was no longer that unity of opinion, that communion of ideas so necessary for the accomplishment of great things. Hatteras knew it well.

During the day they saw two whales making their way south. They also had several shots at a white bear, but they did not succeed in killing him. The captain knew how much the space of an hour was worth just then, and would not lose time in chasing the animal.

On Wednesday morning they passed the extreme end of Regent's Channel. The angle of west shore was followed by a deep bend in the land. On looking at the map the doctor found it was Somerset House Point, or Point Fury.

"Here," said he, to his usual companion, "is the very spot where the first English ship sent into these seas was lost in 1815, during Parry's third voyage to the pole. The *Fury* had been so damaged by the ice in her second winter quarters that the crew were obliged to abandon her, and return to England on board her consort, the *Hecla*."

"An evident advantage in having a second vessel," replied Johnson; "it is a precaution polar navigators ought not to neglect; but Captain Hatteras is not the man to embarrass himself with a consort."

"Do you consider him imprudent, Johnson?" asked the doctor.

"I—I don't think anything about it, Dr. Clawbonny. Look there, do you see those sticks on the shore, which are still supporting a few rags of a half-rotted tent?"

"Yes, Johnson, it is there that Parry landed all his vessel's stores, and, in my memory serves me right, the roof of the house he built was made of a topsail belonging to the *Fury*."

"That has changed a little since 1825."

"Not much, Johnson. In 1829 Sir John Ross found health and safety for his crew in that fragile dwelling. In 1851, when Prince Albert sent an expedition thither, the house was still in existence. Captain Kennedy repaired it nine years ago. It would be very interesting to visit it, but Hatteras is not the man to stop now."

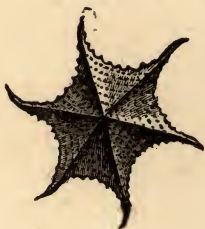
"And he is right, too, Dr. Clawbonny; for if time is money in England, here it is salvation. For one day's delay—nay, one hour's—a whole voyage risks being compromised. Let him, then, act as he thinks proper."

On Thursday, the 1st of June, the weather grew milder, but not so clear. They lost sight of land. The thermometer rose to thirty

two ; a few water hens were flying about, and flocks of wild geese were directing their course northward. The crew were able to lay aside some of their clothing. They could feel the influence of the season even in these Arctic regions.

Towards evening the *Forward* doubled Cape Garry, a quarter of a mile from the land, with a depth of from ten to twelve fathoms, and then coasted along as far as Brentford Bay. It was under this latitude that Bellot Strait was to be met with, the existence of which Sir John Ross did not even suspect in his expedition of 1828. His maps, indeed, show an unbroken coast line, of which he has carefully named and noted all the irregularities. It must be allowed that, at the time of his exploration of the entrance of the strait, it was so completely closed up by ice that it was in no wise to be distinguished from the land itself.

This strait was really discovered by Captain Kennedy in an excursion made in April, 1852. He named it after Lieutenant Bellot, "a just tribute," said he, "to the important services rendered our expedition by the French officer."





CHAPTER XVI.

THE MAGNETIC POLE.

HATTERAS seemed to become more and more uneasy as he approached the strait; in fact, the fate of his voyage was about to be determined. Hitherto he had done more than his predecessors, the most fortunate of whom, McClintock, had been fifteen months reaching this part of the polar seas; but it was little or nothing if he could not get through Bellot's Straits. If he could not turn back again, he saw himself blocked till the following year.

He, therefore, would not trust the survey of the coast to any one but himself. He mounted into the crow's nest, and passed several hours there during the morning of Saturday.

The crew were perfectly well aware of the situation of the ship. Profound silence reigned on board, the engine slackened its speed, the *Forward* crept as near the shore as possible. The coast was fringed with ice, which the heat of summer had been unable to melt. It required a practised eye to pick out an inlet there.

Hatteras compared his maps with the land. The sun having just shown itself, at mid-day he ordered Shandon and Wall to take an exact observation, which was immediately repeated to him. They all waited half a day in great anxiety; then they suddenly heard a hail from the foremast head: "Steer westward! full steam on!" The brig obeyed the helm. She turned her bow in the required direction. The sea foamed under the fans of the screw, and the *Forward* sped along rapidly through the broken ice. The

road was found. Hatteras came down to the poop, and the ice-master took his post again aloft.

"Well, captain," said the doctor, "so we are at last entering this famous strait?"

"Yes," replied Hatteras, lowering his voice, "but getting in is not all; we have to get out again."

So saying he went into his cabin.

"He is right," said the doctor to himself; "it's just like a mouse-trap without much room to turn, and if we were obliged to winter in this strait!—Well, after all we shall not be the first to whom such a thing has happened; and where others have got out again we ought to be able to do so too."

The doctor was not wrong; for it was at this very place, in a little sheltered port, called Port Kennedy by McClintock himself, the *Fox* wintered in 1858.* At this moment one could recognize the lofty granite chain, and the steep cliffs of the two banks.

Bellot Strait is a mile broad and sixteen long, with a current running six or seven knots an hour, and enclosed by mountains the height of which is estimated at sixteen hundred feet.

It separates North Somerset from Boothia Land, and it is easy to see that vessels have not too much sea-room. The *Forward* advanced cautiously, but it did advance. Storms frequently occur in this narrow space, and the brig did not escape without experiencing their violence. By Hatteras' command the topgallant masts and yards had been sent on deck, and extra stays fitted; nevertheless the vessel worked terribly; whole seas came on board her at once, accompanied by torrents of rain: they seemed to be driving quite haphazard among the moving ice; the barometer fell to twenty-nine inches. It was difficult to remain on deck, and most of the crew remained at their quarters, not to be exposed uselessly.

Hatteras, Johnson, and Shandon remained on the poop, notwithstanding the snow and rain, and it must be said, so did the doctor, who, having asked himself the question what would be the most disagreeable thing he could do just then, answered his own question by going on deck immediately. They could not hear and could hardly see one another, so they kept their reflections to themselves.

Hatteras tried to pierce the misty curtain, for, according to his own calculation, he ought to find himself at the end of the strait by six in the evening; but the outlet seemed closed; he was, therefore, obliged to anchor to an iceberg; but he kept steam up all night.

The weather was frightful; the *Forward* threatened to carry her cables away every moment, and there was a danger of that iceberg, torn from its base by the violence of the westerly wind, would drift down upon the brig. The officers were all on the look out, and in constant dread; a hail of arrowy sleet, swept from the

frozen surface of the ice banks, was mingled with whirlwinds of snow.

The temperature rose in a singular manner during this fearful night; the thermometer marked fifty-seven degrees, and the doctor, to his great surprise, believed he could see flashes of lightning to the southward, followed by distant thunder, that seemed to corroborate the whaler Scoresby, who noticed a similar phenomenon beyond the sixty-seventh parallel. Captain Parry also witnessed this meteoric singularity in 1821.

Towards five in the morning the weather changed with surprising rapidity; the temperature suddenly fell to freezing point. The wind veered round to the north and it became calm. They could perceive the western opening of the strait, but entirely blocked up. Hatteras cast an anxious eye towards the south, asking himself whether the passage ever existed at all.

However, the brig got under weigh and glided slowly between the ice streams, which crashed with a loud noise against her sides; the packs at this time were six or seven feet thick; it was necessary to be careful in avoiding being squeezed by them, for even if the vessel withstood the shock it risked being lifted up and turned over on her beam ends.

At mid-day, for the first time, they were enabled to admire a magnificent solar phenomenon, a halo with two parhelia; the doctor observed it and took its exact dimensions; the exterior arc was only visible over an extent of thirty degrees on each side of the horizontal diameter; the two images of the sun were remarkably distinct; the colours observed in the luminous arcs were, from inside to outside, red, yellow, green, and a very pale blue, in fact a whitish light without any decided exterior limit.

The doctor recollected Thomas Young's ingenious theory about these meteors. This physician supposed that certain clouds, composed of ice prisms, are suspended in the atmosphere; the rays of sun falling on them are decomposed at angles of sixty and ninety degrees, consequently there can be no halos in calm weather. The doctor thought this explanation exceedingly ingenious.

Sailors who are accustomed to Arctic seas generally look upon this phenomenon as the precursor of a heavy fall of snow. If this observation was fulfilled the situation of the *Forward* would become very serious, so Hatteras decided on advancing at once; during the rest of that day and the following night, he never took a moment's rest, watching the horizon, taking advantage of every gap, and not losing one chance of getting nearer the outlet of the strait.

But in the morning he was obliged to stop before the impassable ice floe. The doctor joined him on the poop. Hatteras took him to the stern, where they could converse without being overheard.

"We are beset," said Hatteras; "it is impossible to get any farther."

"Impossible?" said the doctor.

"Impossible. All the powder on board the *Forward* could not advance us a quarter of a mile."

"What is to be done, then?"

"How do I know? Curse this fatal year which has presented itself under such unfavourable auspices."

"Well, captain, if we must winter here, we will; we may just as well do so here as elsewhere."

"No doubt," said Hatteras, in a whisper; "but we must not winter at all, especially in the month of June. Winter quarters are full of physical and moral danger. The spirits of the crew soon break down during long inaction and amidst real sufferings. In fact, I reckoned on not stopping until I was in a latitude much nearer the pole."

"Yes, but fate has decreed that Baffin's Bay should be closed."

"It was open for another," cried Hatteras, angrily, "for that American, that——"

"Come, Hatteras," said the doctor, purposely interrupting him, "this is only the 5th of June; don't give way to despair; some passage may suddenly open before us; you know ice has a tendency to break into separate blocks, even in calm weather, as if there was some repulsive force acting on the different masses which compose it; we may at any hour find the sea open."

"Let that hour come, and we shall be ready to cross it; it is very possible that beyond Bellot's Straits we may find it easy to get northward by Peel's Straits, or McClintock Channel, and then——"

Captain," said Wall, at that moment, "we run the risk of losing our rudder by the ice."

"Well," replied Hatteras, "we must run the risk. I will never consent to unshipping it. I mean to be ready at any hour of the day or night. Be so good, Mr. Wall, as to give it every attention and keep the ice off it as much as possible. But it must remain in its place. Do you understand?"

"But——" began Wall.

"I can listen to no observations," said Hatteras, shortly. "Go."

Wall went back to his station.

"Ah," said Hatteras, angrily, "I would give five years of my life to find myself at the north. I know no more dangerous passage than this. To add to the difficulty at this short distance from the magnetic pole, the compass does not act, and the needle becomes dull or loses its power, and is constantly changing its direction."

"I confess," replied the doctor, "that it is a very perilous navigation; but still, those who undertake it must expect such perils, and there is nothing that ought to surprise them."

"Ah, doctor, my crew is very much altered, and as you have just seen, the officers are already allowing themselves to make remarks. The pecuniary advantages offered to the men were able to induce them to join the ship; but they have their bad side, since soon after they started they were already anxious to get back again. Doctor, I shall not be supported in my enterprise, and if I fail it will not be the fault of this or that sailor, of whom I could easily get the better, but by the ill will of certain officers; but they shall pay dearly for it."

"You exaggerate matters, Hatteras."

"I do not exaggerate in the least! Do you believe the crew is discontented on account of the difficulties I have met with? On the contrary, they hope to induce me to give up my attempt! Just now these fellows don't grumble, and so long as the *Forward* keeps her head to the south it will be all very well. The fools; they fancy they are getting nearer England. But if I succeed in steering north, you will see how matters will change. I swear, however, no living man shall make me deviate from one line of conduct. Let me only find a passage open through which my brig can go, though I scrape the copper off her bottom in the attempt, I shall make it all right after all."

The captain's wishes to a certain extent were about to be fulfilled. There was a sudden change towards the evening; and under the influence of either wind, current or temperature, the ice-fields parted; the *Forward* dashed on, crashing with her steel cutwater through the ice; she kept on all night, and the next morning about six was clear of Bellot's Straits.

But to Hatteras's great annoyance the road northward was completely closed. He controlled the expression of his despair, however, and, as if the only course open was the one he had intended to take, he let the *Forward* again descend Franklin Straits. Being unable to ascend Peel's Straits, he made up his mind to coast along Prince of Wales' Land to gain McClintock Channel. But he felt that Shandon and Wall would not be deceived, but could see through his disappointed hopes.

For thirty-six hours the *Forward* followed the windings of the coast of Boothia without nearing Prince of Wales' Land. Hatteras kept up a full head of steam, burning his fuel freely, for he always reckoned at renewing his supply at Beechey Island. On Thursday he arrived at the extremity of Franklin Straits, and there again he found his course to the north closed up.

It was enough to make him despair, he could not even go back, the ice was forcing him on, and he could see the way he had come instantly closed up behind him, as if the sea through which he had passed an hour previously had never been open.

Not only was the *Forward* unable to gain the north, but she dared not delay a moment, lest she should be beset; she ran before the ice like a vessel before a gale of wind.

On Friday, the 8th of June, he was near the coast of Boothia, at the inlet to James Ross's Straits, which he was obliged to avoid, for its only outlet is to the westward, directly on the American coast. Observations taken at midday gave seventy degrees five minutes seventeen seconds latitude, and ninety-six degrees forty-six minutes forty-five seconds longitude. When the doctor heard these figures quoted, he referred to the map and found he was actually at the magnetic pole, at the very spot where James Ross, the nephew of Sir John Ross, had determined it. The land was low near the coast, and at the distance of a mile had only an elevation of sixty feet.

The *Forward's* boiler requiring cleaning, the captain anchored his vessel to an ice-field, and allowed the doctor and the boatswain to go on shore, while he, insensible to everything unconnected with his favourite project, shut up in his cabin, passed his time consulting his map of the pole.

The doctor and his companion soon reached the land; the former carried a compass with which to make some experiments; he wanted to verify James Ross's conclusions. He easily found out the limestone mound constructed by him; he hurried towards it; an opening in it allowed him to see the tin box in which Ross had deposited the report of his discovery.

No living being seemed to have visited this desolate coast for thirty years.

On this spot a loadstone needle suspended as delicately as possible, placed itself immediately, nearly vertically under magnetic influence. The centre of attraction must therefore be at a very trifling distance if not immediately beneath the needle.

The doctor made his experiments very carefully, and ascertained that Ross, on account of his imperfect instruments, had given his vertical needle an inclination of eighty degrees fifty minutes, while the true magnetic point was really one minute from that spot. Dr. Clawbonny was more fortunate, and at some distance from thence he had the extreme satisfaction of finding his own gave an inclination of ninety degrees.

"Here then is the exact spot of the world's magnetic pole," cried he, stamping on the ground with his foot as if to impress his mark upon the precise locality.

"Is it really here?" asked the boatswain; "then there is no loadstone mountain at all, only supposition."

"Yes, my good Johnson, these are the hypotheses of credulity. As you see, there is no mountain here to attract ships, tear out their iron bolts, anchors, and nails; and your shoes are as unimpeded as they would be on any other point on the globe."

"Then how do you explain—"

"Nothing is explained as yet, Johnson; we are not sufficiently learned for that. But what is mathematically certain is that the magnetic pole is here, on this very spot."

"Ah, Dr. Clawbonny, how pleased would he be to say as much of the north pole."

"He will, Johnson, he will, some day or other."

"I wish he may," replied the boatswain. The doctor and his companion raised a cairn on the exact spot where their experiment had been made, and the return signal having been hoisted, they went on board again at five in the evening.





CHAPTER XVII.

THE CATASTROPHE OF SIR JOHN FRANKLIN.

THE *Forward* succeeded in cutting straight across James Ross' Straits, but it was not without some trouble; both saws and blasting had to be employed; the crew were extremely fatigued. The temperature was fortunately very supportable, and thirty degrees higher than it was when Sir James Ross was there at the same time of the year. Their thermometer stood at thirty-four.

On Saturday they doubled Cape Felix at the extreme north of King William's Land, one of the middle-sized islands of these Arctic seas.

The crew then felt a strong and painful impression; they turned sad and inquisitive looks at the island as they sailed along the coast. In fact, they were then within sight of King William's Land, the theatre of the most terrible drama of modern times. A few miles to the westward the *Erebus* and *Terror* were lost.

The men of the *Forward* were well acquainted with the attempt made to discover Franklin's fate, and the results obtained, but they had never heard the afflicting details of the catastrophe. While the doctor was following the course of the vessel on the chart, Bell, Bolton, and Simpson went up to him and began entering into conversation with him. Their comrades soon followed them, out of curiosity. All this time the brig was steaming away, and the coast with its bays, capes, and promontories soon passed out of sight like a gigantic panorama.

Hatteras was pacing up and down the poop. The doctor was sitting on the deck with several of the crew round him. He felt it was an interesting moment, and knew the effect a recital of the facts made under such circumstances would produce. He therefore resumed his conversation with Johnson in the following terms:—

"You know, my friends, how Franklin began his career. He

was a cabin boy, like Cook and Nelson. After passing his youth in great maritime expeditions, he resolved, in 1845, to start in search of the North-West passage. He had the command of the *Erebus* and the *Terror*, two tried vessels, which made an Antarctic campaign with Sir James Ross, in 1840. The *Erebus*, commanded by Franklin, had a crew of seventy men, all told, with Fitz James, commander; Gore and Le Vesconte, lieutenants; Des Vieux, Sargent, and Couch, boatswains, and Doctor Stanley. The *Terror* had sixty-eight men, Captain Crozier; lieutenants, Little, Hodgson, and Irving; Horesby and Thomas, boatswains, and Reddie, surgeon. You can read the names of most of these unfortunates in the bays, capes, promontories, channels, and islands of these regions, not one of whom saw his country again. In all they were a hundred and thirty-eight men. We know from Franklin's last letters, from the island of Disco, and dated July 12, 1845—"I hope," said he, "to get under weigh to-night for Lancaster Sound." What happened since he left Disco Bay? The captains of the whale ships, *Prince of Wales* and *Enterprise*, saw the two vessels for the last time in Melville Bay, and from that day nothing was heard of them. However, we can follow Franklin in his progress westward; he got into Lancaster and Barrow Straits, and arrived at Beechey Island, where he passed the winter of 1845 and 1846."

"But how did all these details become known?" asked Bell, the carpenter.

"From three graves which the Austin expedition discovered on the island, in 1850. In these graves were buried three of Franklin's crew; then, subsequently by help of a document found by Lieutenant Hodson, of the *Fox*, dated April 25, 1848, we knew, then, that after wintering, the *Erebus* and *Terror* ascended Wellington Straits to the seventy-seventh parallel; but, instead of continuing their course northward, a course which was, without doubt, impracticable, they returned to the southward——"

"Which was their destruction," said a grave voice; "their safety lay to the north."

Every one turned round. Hatteras, leaning on the rail, had just addressed this ominous observation to his crew.

"There is no doubt," continued the doctor, "that it was Franklin's intention to return to the American Coast, but he was caught in a storm on this fatal voyage, and the 12th of September, 1846, the two vessels were beset by ice, some miles from here to the north-west of Cape Felix. They were carried along to the north, north-west of Victory Point. There," added the doctor, pointing in one direction out at sea. "Now, the ships were only abandoned on the 22nd of April, 1848. What, then, had occurred during these eighteen months? What did these poor fellows do? No doubt they explored the land all round them, and did all they could to save themselves, for the admiral was a man of energy, and if he did not succeed——"

"Perhaps his crews betrayed him," said Hatteras, in a low tone.

The men did not venture to look up. These words had their effect upon them.

"To be brief, the fatal document tells us also that Sir John Franklin died of fatigue the 11th June, 1847. Honoured be his memory," said the doctor, taking his cap off.

His audience silently followed his example.

"What became of these poor men without their leader for six months? They remained on board their ships, and only decided on abandoning them in April, 1848; one hundred and five were then remaining out of one hundred and thirty-eight. Thirty-three were dead! Then Captains Crozier and FitzJames built a cairn on Point Victory, and there deposited their last document. Look there, my men, we are now passing that very point. You can still distinguish the remains of the cairn, thus placed at the extreme point, arrived at by Sir John Ross, in 1831. There is Cape Jane Franklin, and here Point Franklin, there Point Le Vesconte, there Erebus Bay, where the boat was found made from the materials of one of the ships, and lying on a sledge. There were discovered silver spoons, plenty of provisions, chocolate, tea, and religious books, for the hundred and five survivors under Captain Crozier set out for the Great Fish River. How far did they go? Did they succeed in gaining Hudson's Bay? Do any of them still survive? What became of them after setting out for the last time?"

"I can tell you what became of them," said John Hatteras, in a loud voice. "Yes, they did attempt to get to Hudson's Bay, and broke up into different parties! Yes, they took the road to the south! Yes, in 1854, a letter from Doctor Rae gave the information that in 1850 the Esquimaux had fallen in with a detachment of forty men, on this same King William's Land, hunting sea calves, travelling over the ice, dragging a boat after them, thin, emaciated, and worn out by fatigue and suffering. Some time later they discovered thirty corpses on the mainland, and five on an island close by; some imperfectly buried, others left lying unburied; some under a boat turned upside down, some under the remains of a tent; here an officer was lying with his telescope resting on his shoulder, and his loaded gun close by; farther on a kettle with the remains of a horrible meal! When these news arrived the Admiralty begged the Hudson's Bay Company to send its most trustworthy agents to the place. They descended Back River to its mouth. They visited Montreal and Maconochie Islands and Ogle Point. But they found nothing. All these poor wretches had died of misery, suffering, and hunger, while attempting to prolong their existence by the horrible resources of cannibalism! This is what became of them on their road southward, their mutilated bodies strewed along it. Well, are you still desirous of following in their tracks?"

The ringing tone of his voice, his passionate gestures, and his ardent expression of countenance, produced an indescribable effect. The crew, excited by the emotion arising from the presence of this fatal land, all called out together:—

“To the north! To the north!”

“Yes, to the north! safety and honour are there! To the north! Heaven is in our favour! The wind is changing, the pass is free! Prepare to go about!”

The sailors hurried to their stations, the ice streams cleared away by degrees, and the *Forward* made the best of her way to McClintock Channel.

Hatteras was right in calculating on finding a more open sea. He followed up the route presumed to have been taken by Franklin. He coasted along the eastern shore of Prince of Wales' Land, then sufficiently well surveyed, while the opposite side is still unknown.

The break up of the ice towards the south had taken place in the narrow channels to the eastward, for this strait appeared entirely free. Thus the *Forward* was in a position to regain the time she had lost. She steamed so fast that the 14th of June she passed Osborne Bay and the extreme points reached by the expeditions of 1851. There was still much ice in the strait, but the sea no longer threatened to fail the *Forward's* keel.





CHAPTER XVIII.

THE NORTHERN ROUTE.

THE crew seemed to have returned to its habits of discipline and obedience. The work on board the ship was not fatiguing, and gave them plenty of leisure time. The temperature remained above freezing point, and the thaw seemed likely to remove the great obstacles to the navigation.

Duke, now familiar and sociable, was on very good terms with Doctor Clawbonny. But as in friendship there is always one friend sacrificed to the other, it must be confessed that other was not Doctor Clawbonny. Duke did with him what he liked. The doctor obeyed as a dog does his master. Duke was very amiable, too, to the greater number of the men and officers; but he, instinctively no doubt, avoided Shandon. He had also a grudge, and more than a grudge, against Pen and Foker; his hatred to them was betrayed by low growls when they came near him. But the latter had no longer any intention of attacking the captain's dog, his "familiar," as Clifton termed him. Altogether the crew had regained confidence, and conducted themselves well.

"It seems to me," said Wall to Shandon one day, "that our men have paid serious attention to what the captain told them. They seem to have no doubt of success now."

"They are wrong," said Shandon. "If they only looked their situation in the face, and only reflected a little, they would see we are going from one imprudent step to another."

"Still," said Wall, "here we are in a more open sea, we are returning to well-known routes. You must be exaggerating, Shandon."

"I don't exaggerate at all, Wall. The dislike, and the jealousy

if you like, with which Hatteras inspires me, do not blind me in the least. Tell me, have you looked into the coal bunkers lately?"

"No," replied Wall.

"Well, then, do so, and you will see how fast our stock of fuel is diminishing. On principle we ought to have chiefly relied on our sails, the screw reserved for ascending contrary currents or going against the wind; our combustibles ought only to be employed with the most rigid economy, for who can tell in what part of these seas, or for how many years we may be kept here? But Hatteras, excited by that constant craze of his to get northward, and reach this inaccessible pole, pays no attention to such details as these. Let the wind be against us or not he keeps going full steam ahead, and if this goes on much longer we risk being in great difficulty, if not actually lost."

"If what you say is true, Shandon, it is a very serious matter."

"Yes, Wall, serious, not only for the engine, which, for want of fuel, would be utterly useless to us in critical circumstances, but serious also when it comes to wintering here, which sooner or later will be the case. Now, some regard must be had for cold in a country where the mercury often freezes in the thermometer."

"But, unless I am mistaken, the captain calculates on being able to get a fresh supply at Beechey Island, there must be a quantity of coal there."

"Can one go where one likes in these seas, Wall? Can we reckon on finding the strait clear of ice? And suppose he misses Beechey Island, or cannot get there, what is to become of us?"

"You are right, Shandon, Hatteras seems to me to be imprudent. But why don't you make some representations to him on the subject?"

"No, Wall," replied Shandon, with ill-disguised bitterness; "I have resolved to say nothing. The responsibility of the vessel's safety no longer rests on me. I shall wait and see how things turn out. If he gives me orders I shall carry them out, but I shall give no opinion whatever."

"Allow me to observe you are in the wrong, Shandon, since we are all interested, and these acts of imprudence on the captain's part may cost us all dear."

"And if I spoke to him do you suppose he would listen to me?"

Wall could not take upon himself to say he would.

"But, perhaps," said he, "he would listen to the whole crew's remonstrances."

"The crew's! why, my poor Wall, have you not seen what they are? They are thinking of something quite different to their safety. They know that if they can reach the seventy-second parallel each man gains a sum of one thousand pounds for every degree beyond."

"You are again right, Shandon, and the captain has taken the best means in his power to make sure of his men."

"Yes," replied Shandon, "for the present moment he has."

"Explain yourself."

"I mean to say that in the absence of danger and fatigue on an open sea, things will go on smoothly enough. Hatteras has gained his power over them by money, but what is done for money only is badly done. When difficulties arise, danger, misery, sickness, discouragement, and cold, towards which we are now hurrying like madmen, you will see then whether these men will give a thought to the money they are to have."

"Then, according to you, Hatteras will not succeed?"

"No, Wall, he will not succeed. In such an enterprise perfect unanimity must exist among the leaders, a sympathy which is not here. I would add that Hatteras is a madman; his whole past career proves it. Well, we shall see! circumstances may arise which may compel the command to be put into the hands of a less rash captain——"

"But," said Wall, shaking his head doubtfully, "Hatteras will always have on his side——"

"He will have," said Shandon, interrupting the officer, "he will have Doctor Clawbonny, a *savant* whose only object is science; Johnson, a sailor, who, a slave to discipline, does not take the trouble to think, and one or two others, Bell, the carpenter, four at most, and we are eighteen on board. No, Wall, Hatteras has lost the confidence of the crew, he knows he has, his bait is money; he has very adroitly profited by this story of Franklin's fate to gain them for a time, but that won't last, I tell you, and if he cannot touch at Beechey Island he is a lost man."

"If the crew only knew——"

"I beg you will not mention these observations to any of them," answered Shandon, quickly; "they will make them for themselves. Besides, at this moment we must continue to go north. But who knows whether what Hatteras believes the road to the pole is not in truth a retreat? At the end of Melville Channel is McClintock Bay, and into it the straits open leading to Baffin's Bay. Hatteras must take care; the road to the east is easier than that to the north."

From these words of Shandon, it is clear the captain was right in expecting some act of treachery from him.

Besides, Shandon was quite right when he attributed the present contented state of the crew to the prospect of soon passing the seventy-second parallel.

This greed for money had infected even the least bold on board. Clifton had calculated exactly what each man's share would amount to.

Leaving out the captain and the doctor, who could not expect to share in the bounty, there were sixteen men left—the bounty being a thousand pounds, that gave sixty-two pounds ten shillings a-head. If ever they reached the pole, the eighteen degrees gained left every

man a sum of eleven hundred and twenty-five pounds, that is to say a fortune.

This fancy would cost the captain eighteen thousand pounds, but he was rich, and could afford for an excursion to the pole.

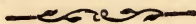
These calculations had excited the cupidity of the crew, and more than one hoped to get north, who, a fortnight before, was rejoicing in the idea of returning south.

The *Forward* was abreast of Cape Aworth on the 16th of June. Mount Rawlinson was raising its white peaks to the sky; snow and mist together gave it a colossal appearance by exaggerating its distance: the temperature remained some degrees above freezing; cataracts and cascades made their appearance on the mountain's sides, avalanches came tumbling down with a report resembling the discharge of heavy artillery. Arctic nature fighting against a thaw offered a splendid spectacle. The brig kept very near the coast, a few heaths were to be seen on sheltered spots on the rocks, their pink flowers peeping through the snow, while a few meagre lichens of a reddish colour, and the roots of a species of dwarf willow, crept along the soil.

At last, on the 19th of June, in the famous seventy-second degree of latitude, they doubled Point Minto, which forms one of the extremities of Ommaney Bay, and the brig entered Melville Bay, facetiously named by Bolton, Money Bay, which made Doctor Clawbonny laugh heartily.

The *Forward* easily made such progress, notwithstanding a strong breeze from the north-east, that on the 23rd of June she passed the seventy-fourth degree of latitude. She was then in the middle of Melville Basin, one of the most considerable seas in those regions. This sea was crossed for the first time by Captain Parry, in his great expedition of 1819, and it was there that his crew gained the bounty of five thousand pounds promised by Act of Parliament.

Clifton contented himself by remarking that there were two degrees from the seventy-second to the seventy-fourth, which already put a hundred and twenty-five pounds to his credit. But some one observed that in these regions money was not much; that he could only call himself rich when he was in a position to drink his money away, and, therefore, he had better wait till the time came when he could roll under the table of a Liverpool grog shop before he began rejoicing and rubbing his hands.





CHAPTER XIX.

A WHALE IN SIGHT.

MELVILLE Bay, though the navigation was open, was not free from ice. They could see immense ice floes, extending to the limits of the horizon, here and there appeared several icebergs, but motionless and apparently at anchor in the frozen fields. The *Forward* steamed through wide passes where she had plenty of room. The wind changed frequently, jumping from one point of the compass to another.

This variability in the wind in the Arctic seas is a remarkable fact, and sometimes there are but a few minutes between a flat calm and a violent storm. That is what Hatteras experienced on the 23rd of June, in the middle of that immense bay.

The most constant winds are those which generally blow from the field-ice to the open sea, and are very cold. That day the thermometer fell several degrees; the wind went round to the south, and strong gusts of wind passing across the ice let their moisture fall in the shape of heavy snow. Hatteras immediately furled his sails, which were set to help the screw, but not so fast but what his fore-topgallant sail was carried away.

Hatteras worked his ship very coolly, and never left the deck while the squall lasted; he was obliged to run before it to the westward. The wind raised enormous waves on which great blocks of ice were floating, just torn from the surrounding icebergs. The brig shook like a child's plaything, and pieces of ice were thrown on her deck; one moment she was raised almost perpendicularly on the top of a mountain of water—her steel cutwater, concentrating the light, sparkled like a bar of molten metal—then down she went,

dipping her bows amidst clouds of her own smoke, while her screw, quite out of water, made a fearful noise as it revolved, striking the air with its fans. Rain, mixed with snow, fell in torrents.

The doctor could not let such an opportunity pass of getting wet to the skin; he remained on deck, a prey to all the emotions of admiration which every learned man was bound to experience at such a spectacle.

The man close to him could not have heard his voice, so he remained silent while he looked on; but while he looked he was a witness to a strange phenomenon, peculiar to hyperborean regions.

The storm only extended to a distance of three or four miles, and it was only necessary for the *Forward* to take advantage of some passage through the ice to find smooth water again, but in doing so it risked being cast on to those moving banks, which followed the movement of the swell. Hatteras, however, succeeded in getting his vessel into a calm sea again in a few hours, while the violence of the hurricane which was raging on the horizon was spent only a few cables' length from the *Forward*.

Melville Bay no longer presented the same aspect; under the influence of the winds and the waves a great number of icebergs, detached from the coast, drifted towards the north, crossing and running against one another in every direction. They might be counted in hundreds, but the bay is wide, and the brig easily kept clear of them. The sight of these floating masses was magnificent—some moving faster than others, they seemed to be racing over the sea.

The doctor was quite enthusiastic about them, when Simpson, the harpooner, went up to him and pointed out the changing tints of the sea; these tints varied from deep blue to olive green; long lines extended from north to south with stripes so distinctly marked that, as far as one could see, the difference in colour was clearly distinguishable. Sometimes also a perfectly transparent sheet of water was followed by another entirely opaque.

"Well, Dr. Clawbonny, what do you think of that peculiarity?" asked Simpson.

"I think, my friend, as the whale-fisher, Scoresby, did about the nature of this variously tinted water, that the blue water is without the presence of those millions of *animaculæ* and *meduvæ* with which the green water is impregnated; he made several experiments on this subject, and I believe he was quite right."

"Ah, sir, there is something else to be learned from the discoloration of the sea."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, Dr. Clawbonny, and if the *Forward* was only a whaler I believe I could show you some sport."

"But," cried the doctor, "I see no signs of a whale hereabouts."

"We shall not be long without seeing one, I promise you. It is

good luck for a whaler to fall in with these green patches in this latitude."

"Why?" asked the doctor, very much interested in these harpooner's professional remarks.

"Because it is in green water that whales are caught in the greatest quantity."

"And the reason, Simpson?"

"Because they find more food there."

"Are you certain of that fact?"

"I have tried the experiment hundreds of times in Baffin's Bay: and I don't see why it should not be the same in Melville Bay."

"You are probably quite right, Simpson."

"And look there," said the latter, leaning over the rail, "look there, Dr. Clawbonny."

"Ah!" said the doctor, "it looks like the wake of a vessel."

"Now," said Simpson, "that's a greasy substance which the whale leaves behind it. Believe me, the animal which produced it cannot be far distant."

The atmosphere was certainly impregnated with a strong smell of train oil. The doctor began to watch the surface of the sea attentively, and the harpooner's prediction was not long in finding its fulfilment. Foker hailed from the mast-head:—

"A whale under our lee!"

All looks were turned in the direction indicated. A long water spout was seen a mile from the brig.

"There it is!" cried Simpson, whose experience could not deceive him.

"It has disappeared," cried the doctor.

"We could easily find it again if we wanted," said Simpson, in a tone of regret.

But to his great surprise, before any one dared to make the request, Hatteras ordered the whaleboat to be manned. He was not sorry to give the crew that amusement, and he was glad of the chance of getting a few barrels of oil. So the permission to chase the whale was received with great satisfaction.

Four men took their places in the whaleboat; Johnson went aft to steer; Simpson stood in the bow with his harpoon in his hand. They could not keep the doctor out of the boat. The sea was tolerably calm. The whaleboat was in ten minutes a mile from the brig.

The whale having taken in a fresh supply of air had gone down again, but it soon rose to the surface, and spouted fifteen feet in the air that mixture of steam and mucus which escapes from its air-holes:

"There, there!" cried Simpson, pointing to a spot eight hundred yards from the boat which was steered oward the animal, and the brig having seen it at the same time, also steamed slowly up to it. The enormous creature appeared and disappeared, rising and sinking on the waves, showing its dark back like a reef in the middle of the

sea. The whale does not swim fast when it is not chased, and this one only rolled about in the water. The boat quietly got very near in the green water, the opaqueness of which prevented its being seen by the fish. It is a very exciting spectacle to see a fragile boat attacking one of these monsters. This one might measure about a hundred and twenty feet, and it is not seldom that whales are met with between the seventy-second and eightieth degree exceeding a hundred and eighty feet in length. Ancient writers have even mentioned some seven hundred feet long, but these must be classed among the imaginary species.

The boat was soon close to the whale. Simpson made a sign; they lay on their oars, and the harpooner, balancing his weapon skilfully, buried its barbed end up to the shaft in the thick layer of blubber. The wounded whale struck the sea with its tail and sank. The oars were tossed, the rope attached to the harpoon paid out, and the boat was dragged after the whale, being carefully steered by Johnson.

The whale in its course left the brig and neared the moving icebergs, and this lasted for half an hour, while the rope was kept from catching fire from the friction by one hand pouring water on it. When the animal's speed seemed to diminish, the rope was drawn in by degrees and carefully coiled away; the whale soon came to the surface, thrashing the sea with its formidable tail; while the water it spouted from its airholes fell like rain over the boat, which came rapidly up to it, while Simpson stood ready to give it its death blow with a long lance.

But the whale suddenly took a direction between two icebergs; whither it would have been extremely dangerous to follow.

"The devil!" said Johnson.

"Pull!" cried Simpson, "pull hard, men, and the whale is ours."

"But we can't follow it between those icebergs," cried Johnson, checking the boat.

"Yes, we can," cried Simpson.

"No, no!" exclaimed some of the men.

"Yes," said others.

During this discussion the whale had gone between two icebergs, which the swell and the wind were driving rapidly together.

The boat, towed along by the whale, seemed on the point of being dragged into the same dangerous position, when Johnson jumped forward and cut the rope attached to the harpoon.

"Lost!" cried Simpson.

"Saved!" cried Johnson.

"Indeed!" said the doctor, who had not stirred all the time, "that was well worth seeing."

The crushing power of these icebergs is enormous. The whale was the victim of an accident often repeated in these seas. Scoresby relates that in the course of one summer alone, thirty whales were

lost in this manner in Baffin's Bay ; he saw a three-masted vessel flattened in one minute between two immense walls of ice, which coming rapidly together, destroyed it entirely—crew and all. Other vessels were pierced through and through by icicles a hundred feet long, before his face, meeting through the planking.

A few minutes after, the boat was alongside the brig, and was soon hoisted up to its proper place on deck.

"That ought to be a lesson," said Shandon, in a loud voice, "for those who are so foolish as to risk a passage through the ice fields."





CHAPTER XX.

BEECHEY ISLAND.

ON the 25th of June, the *Forward* arrived in sight of Cape Dundas, at the north-western extremity of Prince of Wales' Land. Their difficulties increased with the quantity of ice they met. The sea is there more confined, and the line of Crozier, Young, Day, Lowther, and Garret Islands, ranged like forts in front of a roadstead, caused the ice-streams to accumulate in that particular locality.

This obliged the brig to spend the time from the 25th to the 30th of June in accomplishing what otherwise would only have required one day, awaiting a favourable opportunity not to miss Beechey Island. Thus consuming a great quantity of coal, sometimes under low steam, but never letting her fires out, in order to be able to get up steam at any hour of the day or night.

Hatteras knew as well as Shandon the state of his coal bunkers; but feeling certain of finding fuel at Beechey Island, he did not wish to lose a moment for economy's sake; it had lost a great deal of time, in consequence of the detour he had made to the southward, and though he had taken the precaution of leaving England in April, he found himself no farther advanced than the former expeditions at a similar period.

On the 30th, they made Cape Walker at the north-eastern extremity of Prince of Wales' Land. It is the extreme point which Kennedy and Bellot saw, May the 3rd, 1852, after an excursion across the whole of North Somerset. Captain Ommaey, of the Austin expedition, had the good fortune to revictual his detachment there in 1851.

This lofty cape is remarkable for its brownish red colour; from thence in fine weather, the view extends to the entrance of Wellington Channel. Towards evening they saw Cape Bellot, separated from Cape Walker by Mac Leon Bay. Cape Bellot was thus named

in the presence of the young French officer, whom the English expedition saluted with three cheers.

About this spot the coast consists of a yellow calcareous stone, very rugged in appearance. It is protected by enormous blocks of ice, which the north wind has heaped up there in a most imposing manner. It was soon lost to sight of the *Forward*, which forced herself away through the half-formed ice to Beechey Island, by crossing Barrow's Strait.

Hatteras resolved to keep in a straight line, that he might not be carried beyond the island; he hardly ever left his post the following days, and frequently went up to the topgallant yard to choose the safest passages. All that skill, courage, and coolness, combined with seamanship could do, he exerted during their passage up the strait. Chance, it was true, did not help him much, for at that season he ought to have found the sea nearly free from ice. But at last from sparing neither his steam, his crew, nor himself, he attained his end.

On the 3rd of July, at eleven in the morning, the ice master announced land to the northward, and Hatteras recognized Beechey Island, the general rendezvous of Arctic navigators. Nearly all vessels which ventured into these seas used to touch there. There Franklin had his first winter quarters before venturing into Wellington Straits; there Cresswell, MacClure's lieutenant, after having travelled a hundred and seventy miles across the ice, rejoined the *Phoenix*, and returned to England. The last vessel which anchored at Beechey Island before the *Forward* was the *Fox*. McClintock revictualled there the 11th of August, 1855, and repaired the houses and magazines, not two years ago. Hatteras was well acquainted with all these details.

The boatswain's heart began to beat at the sight of this island; when he was last there he was quarter-master on board the *Phoenix*. Hatteras questioned him about the nature of the coast, the best anchorage, what chance there was of getting aground. The weather was magnificent, and the temperature remained steady at fifty-seven degrees.

"Well, Johnson?" asked the captain, "do you know where you are?"

"Yes, captain; this is Beechey Island, indeed. But we had better get a little more to the north; the coast is more easily approached."

"But where are the houses and magazines?"

"You cannot see them till you land; they are sheltered behind those little hills you see down there."

"And you carried there a quantity of provisions?"

"A great quantity, captain. The Admiralty sent us here in 1853, under the command of Captain Inglefield, with the steamer *Phoenix*, and transport the *Breadalbane*, loaded with provisions; we had with us enough to revictual a whole expedition."

"But the commander of the *Fox* must have carried away a considerable quantity in 1855," said Hatteras.

"No fear, sir, there will be plenty left for you; the cold preserves them perfectly, and we shall find them as fresh and in as good condition as when first deposited here."

"I am not anxious about provisions," replied Hatteras; "I have enough for years to come; what I want is coal."

"Well, captain, we left more than a thousand tons there, so you need be under no uneasiness."

"Let her go nearer in," cried Hatteras, who was watching the coast through his glass.

"Do you see that point?" resumed Johnson; "when we have doubled it we shall be close to our anchorage. Yes, it is from this spot we set out for England with Lieutenant Cresswell and twelve invalids from the *Investigator*. But if we had the good luck to carry Captain McClure's lieutenant safe home, the French officer Bellot, who was with us on board the *Phœnix*, never saw his own country again. It is a sad thing to remember. But, captain, I think we ought to anchor here."

"Do so," replied Hatteras.

The *Forward* was in a little bay, naturally sheltered from the north, east, and southerly winds, about a cable's length from the shore.

"Mr. Wall," said Hatteras, "man the long boat and send it with six hands to get the coal on board."

"Yes, sir," replied Wall.

"I shall go ashore in the jolly-boat with the doctor and the boatswain. Mr. Shandon, will you come with us?"

"I am at your orders," replied Shandon.

A few minutes afterwards the doctor, equipped as sportsman and *savant*, took his place in the jolly-boat with his companions; and ten minutes later they landed on a low lying rocky shore.

"Lead the way, Johnson," said Hatteras; "you know it again, I suppose."

"Perfectly well, captain; but here is a monument I did not expect to find in this place."

"That!" cried the doctor; "I know what that is; the stone itself will tell us what it has come so far to do."

The four men advanced, and the doctor then said, taking his cap off as he spoke:—

"This, my friends, is a monument raised to the memory of Franklin and his companions. In fact, Lady Franklin having forwarded a tablet of black marble to Dr. Kane in 1855, entrusted another to McClintock in 1858, to be erected on Beechey Island. McClintock religiously fulfilled this duty, and he erected this tablet near a stone already set up to Bellot's memory by the care of Sir John Barrow. The tablet bore the following inscription—

To the Memory of

FRANKLIN, CROZIER, FITZJAMES,

and of all their valiant brothers, officers, and faithful companions who have suffered and perished in the cause of science and for their country's glory,

This stone is erected near the spot where they passed their first Arctic winter, and whence they set forth to triumph over difficulties or to die.

It consecrates the recollections of their countrymen and friends who admire them, and the grief, subdued by faith, of her who lost in the leader of this expedition, the most devoted and affectionate of husbands.

It is thus that He led them to the last port where they all rest.

1855.

This stone, on the desolate coast of these distant regions, spoke in painful terms to the heart, and the doctor, in presence of these touching regrets, felt tears come into his eyes. On the very spot where Franklin and his companions had been, full of energy and hope, there was nothing but a piece of marble left as a recollection, and notwithstanding the gloomy warning the *Forward* was about to hurry on the track of the *Erebus* and the *Terror*.

Hatteras was the first to rouse himself, and rapidly ascended a hillock, which was almost entirely free from snow.

"We shall see the magazines from there, captain," said Johnson, following him.

Shandon and the doctor joined them just as they reached the top, but from thence nothing met their eyes but vast plains without the vestige of a habitation.

"That is very strange," said the boatswain.

"Well, where are the magazines?" asked Hatteras impatiently.

"I don't know—I can't see—" stammered Johnson.

"You have mistaken your way," suggested the doctor.

"It seemed to me, however, this was the very place—"

"Well," said Hatteras, quickly, "which way must we go?"

"Let us go down," said the boatswain, "it is very possible I am mistaken; I may have forgotten the localities after seven years' absence."

"Especially," said the doctor, "when the country is so monotonously uniform."

"And yet—" muttered Johnson. Shandon had not made an observation.

After walking a few minutes Johnson stopped.

"No," cried he, "I am not mistaken."

"Well," said Hatteras, looking about him.

"What makes you say so, Johnson?" asked the doctor.

"Do you see that rise in the ground?" asked the boatswain, pointing to three distinct swellings in a mound at his feet.

"What do you conclude from that?"

"Those are the graves of three of Franklin's sailors. I am sure now I am not deceived, and we ought to find the magazines a hundred yards from here, and if they are not, they must—"

He did not dare to finish his sentence. Hatteras hurried forward a prey to despair, for there indeed ought to have been found the hoped-for magazines with stores of every description, on which he had reckoned so long, but ruin, plunder, and destruction had been where civilized hands had created immense resources for exhausted navigators. Who could have been guilty of these depredations? The animals of these regions, the bears, wolves, and foxes? No, for they would only have attacked the food, and there was not a rag of a tent left, nor a piece of wood, nor a morsel of iron, nor a bit of metal of any description, and what was a still more terrible circumstance for the crew of the *Forward*, not a particle of fuel.

It was clear that the Esquimaux, who had seen much of European vessels, had at last learned the value of these objects, of which, in their normal state, they are entirely deprived. Since the *Fox* had called there they had repeatedly been to this place of abundance, pillaging and carrying everything off, with the very sensible idea of leaving no trace behind of what had been there, and now a wide curtain of snow covered the ground.

Hatteras was confounded. The doctor looked at him and shook his head. Shandon never spoke, but an attentive observer might have noticed a malicious smile on his lips.

At this moment the men, sent by Wall, came up. They understood the state of the case. Shandon walked up to the captain and said—

"Mr. Hatteras, we need not despair; we are fortunately at the entrance to Barrow's Straits, which will take us into Baffin's Bay."

"Mr. Shandon," replied Hatteras, "we are fortunately at the entrance to Wellington Strait, which will take us northward."

"And how are we to get there, captain?"

"Under canvas. We have still two months' fuel, and that is more than we shall want for our next winter quarters."

"You must allow me to observe—" began Shandon.

"I will allow you to follow me on board my vessel, sir," replied Hatteras.

And turning his back on his second in command he went on board the brig and shut himself up in his cabin.

For two days the wind was contrary. The captain was not seen on deck.

The doctor profited by this forced halt to ramble about the island. He gathered the few plants which a comparatively warm temperature allowed to grow here and there, on rocks where there was no snow—a few heaths, lichens, a sort of yellow ranunculus, a plant resembling sorrel, with very small leaves, and some vigorous saxifrages.

The fauna of these regions was superior to the flora. The doctor saw large flocks of geese and cranes flying towards the north; partridges, and eider ducks of a blue-black, sandpipers, waders of the scolopax class, northern divers with very long bodies; numerous ptarmiges, a sort of water-quail, very good to eat; dovebies with black bodies, wings spotted with white, and feet and bill as red as coral; bands of screaming kitty wakes, and great loons with white breasts. These worthily represented the order of birds on the island. The doctor was also fortunate enough to kill a few grey hares, which had not yet put on their winter fur, and a blue fox, which Duke caught very cleverly. Some bears, which evidently had reason to dread the presence of man, would not let him get near them, and the seals were extremely shy, no doubt for the same reason as their enemies, the bears. One single mosquito represented his class, order, and family, which the doctor was lucky enough to catch after he had been bitten by him. The bay was full of a sort of whelk, which was very pleasant to eat, and as for shells, he could only find some mussel and bivalve shells.





CHAPTER XXI.

BELLOT'S DEATH.

THE thermometer, during the days of the 3rd and 4th of July, stood firm at fifty-seven; this was the highest point observed during this campaign. But on Thursday, the 5th, the wind passed over to the south-east, and was accompanied by violent snow-storms. The thermometer fell the preceding night twenty-five degrees.

Hatteras, without paying any attention to the crew's discontent, gave orders for getting under weigh. For thirteen days, that is to say, from Cape Dundas, the *Forward* had not gained one degree northward, so the party represented by Clifton was not satisfied; it is true, their wishes agreed with the captain's resolution to get into Wellington Channel, and they made no difficulty about working the ship.

The brig got under sail with some difficulty, but Hatteras, having set his foresail, topsails, and topgallant-sails during the night, boldly advanced amidst floats of ice, which the current was driving southward. The men were tired of this intricate navigation, which caused them to be continually bracing the yards.

Wellington Channel is not very wide; it is confined between the coast of North Devon, on the east, and Cornwallis Island on the west. This island was for a long time thought to be a peninsula. It was Sir John Franklin who first sailed round it in 1846, starting from the west, and returning to his starting point, north of the channel. The survey of Wellington Channel was made in 1851, by Captain Penny, with the whalers, *Lady Franklin* and *Sophia*; Stewart, one of his lieutenants, having reached Cape Beecher, in latitude seventy-six degrees twenty seconds, discovered open sea. Open sea! this was what Hatteras was hoping for.

"What Stewart found I can find," said he to the doctor; "and then I can sail to the pole."

"But," replied the doctor, in a whisper, "are you not afraid of your crew?"

"My crew!" said Hatteras, contemptuously. Then in a lower tone—

"Poor fellows!" he muttered, to the doctor's great astonishment. He had not heard such an expression of feeling on the captain's part before.

"No," said the latter, energetically; "they must follow me, and they shall!"

If the *Forward* had nothing to fear from collision with the icebergs which were at no considerable distances apart, it made but little progress northward, for opposing winds frequently made her bring up. They, with great trouble, succeeded in weathering Spencer and Innis Capes, and on Tuesday, the 10th, the seventy-fifth degree of latitude was reached, to Clifton's great delight.

The *Forward* was now in the same place where the American vessels, the *Rescue* and the *Advance*, commanded by Captain Haven, were in such fearful danger.

Doctor Kane was in this expedition. Towards the end of September, 1860, these vessels, beset by ice, were drifted helplessly into Lancaster Sound.

Shandon was giving Wall an account of this catastrophe before some of the men.

"The *Advance* and the *Rescue*," said he, "were so tossed about by the ice that they could keep no fires on board; and that with a temperature eighteen degrees below zero. During the whole winter the unfortunate crews were kept prisoners by the ice, always ready to abandon their ships, and for three weeks they never took their clothes off. It was in this frightful situation, after drifting a thousand miles, they were driven by the currents into the middle of Baffin's Bay."

One may conceive the moral effect of such accounts as these on the minds of a discontented crew.

About the same time Johnson was giving the doctor an account of an event, of which this locality had been the theatre; the doctor, at his request, told him when the brig was in latitude seventy-five degrees thirty minutes.

"There it is, that is the place!" cried Johnson; "there is that fatal shore."

"You refer to Lieutenant Bellot's death," said the doctor.

"Yes, Dr. Clawbonny, that good-hearted and brave officer."

"And it was hereabouts that catastrophe happened."

"Just about here, on this part of the North Devon Coast. 'It was a strange fatality, and this misfortune would never have occurred if Captain Pullen had come on board sooner.'"

"What do you mean, Johnson?"

"Listen, Dr. Clawbonny, and you will see what life hangs on sometimes. You know Lieutenant Bellot had made a previous voyage in search of Franklin, in 1850?"

"Yes, Johnson, on board the *Prince Albert*."

"Well, in 1853, when he returned to France, he obtained permission to embark on board the *Phœnix*, where I was serving as a seaman, under Captain Inglefield. We were returning with the *Breadalbane* transport from leaving stores at Beechey Island."

"Those which have so unfortunately failed us?"

"Just so, Dr. Clawbonny. We arrived at Beechey Island at the beginning of August; on the 10th, Captain Inglefield left the *Phœnix* to join Captain Pullen, who had been separated from his ship, the *North Star*, for a month. At his return he intended to send the Admiralty despatches to Sir Edward Belcher, who was wintering in Wellington Channel.

"Now, shortly after our captain left, Commander Pullen came on board. Why had he not returned before Captain Inglefield's departure? Lieutenant Bellot, fearing our Captain's absence might still be prolonged, and knowing that the Admiralty despatches were urgent, offered to take charge of them himself.

"He left the command of the two vessels to Captain Pullen, and set off the 12th of April with a sledge and an india-rubber boat.

"He took with him Harvey, the *North Star's* quarter-master, and three seamen, Madden, Hook, and myself. We supposed that Sir Edward Belcher would be found somewhere about Cape Beecher to the north of the channel; so we took that direction in the sledge, keeping close to the east shore. The first day we encamped three miles from Cape Innis; the next day we stopped on a block of ice, about three miles from Cape Bowden. During the night which, by-the-by was as bright as day, the land being about three miles distant, Lieutenant Bellot decided on encamping there; he tried to get there in the india-rubber boat; twice he was driven back by a strong breeze from the south-east. Harvey and Madden tried in their turn and succeeded, they had taken a rope with them, and thus they established a communication between the sledge and the shore. Three objects had been carried across by means of the rope, but at a fourth attempt we felt our block of ice begin to move. Mr. Bellot called out to his companions to cast off the rope, and we, the lieutenant, David Hook, and myself, were taken a considerable distance from the shore. At that moment the wind was blowing hard from the south-east and snow was falling. But we were in no great danger, and he might have been saved as we were.

"After losing sight of our companions, we first tried to shelter ourselves under the tent belonging to the sledge, but in vain, and then with our knives we began to cut out a hut in the ice. Mr. Bellot sat talking to us for half an hour about the danger of our position. I said to him, 'I am not afraid.' 'With God's assistance,' said he, 'not a hair of our heads shall fall.' I asked him what the time was,

and he replied, 'About a quarter-past six.' It was a quarter-past six in the morning of Thursday, the 18th of August.

"Then Mr. Bellot tied his books together, and said he would go and see how the ice was floating; he had been gone four minutes at most, when I went to look for him, going round the same block of ice under which we were sheltering ourselves; but I could not see him, and as I came back to our retreat I saw his pole on the opposite side of a crack, about thirty feet wide, where the ice was broken. I called out, but there was no reply. At that moment the wind was blowing very strong. I searched all round the block, but I could discover no trace of the poor lieutenant."

"And how do you suppose it happened?" inquired the doctor, much touched at this story.

"I suppose when Mr. Bellot went out of the hole in which we were sheltered from the wind, the wind blew him into the crack, and his coat being buttoned tight round him, he was unable to keep himself afloat. Ah! Dr. Clawbonny, I never felt more pain in my life; I could hardly believe it. This brave young officer, a victim to his duty. For you must know it was in obedience to Captain Pullen's instructions that he tried to get ashore, before this break up took place. He was a brave young man, liked by every one on board, so obliging; and even down to the Esquimaux, when they heard of the good lieutenant's death from Captain Inglefield on his return from Pound Bay, said, as they wept as I do now, 'Poor Bellot, poor Bellot!'"

"And what became of yourself and your companions, Johnson?" asked the doctor. "How did you succeed in reaching land?"

"Why, sir, that was no great matter. We remained four and twenty hours on the ice without food or fire; but at last we fell in with a piece of field ice which had gone ashore on a shallow; we jumped on to it and, by the help of an oar, which we had left, we caught hold of a block of ice capable of bearing us, and of being handled like a raft. In this way we reached the shore at last, but alone, without our brave officer."

By the time Johnson had finished his story the *Forward* had passed this fatal shore, and Johnson lost sight of the place where this catastrophe had occurred. The next day they left Griffin Bay on the starboard hand, and two days afterwards Capes Grinnel and Helpmann. At last, July 14th, they doubled Osborne Point, and the 15th, the brig came to an anchor in Baring Bay, at the extreme end of the strait. The navigation had not been very difficult. Hatteras had fallen in with a sea almost as free from ice as that by which Belcher profited to go and winter with the *Pioneer* and the *Assistance* at nearly the seventy-fifth degree. This was from 1852 to 1853, during his first wintering out there, for the following year he passed the winter, 1853-54, in this same Baring Bay, where the *Forward* was then at anchor.

It was in consequence of most frightful trials and dangers that

he was obliged to abandon the *Assistance* amidst this eternal ice. Shandon also told the story of this catastrophe to the disaffected seamen. Was Hatteras aware of his first officer's treacherous conduct, or was he not? It is impossible to say; at all events he said nothing about it.

At the upper part of Baring Bay there is a narrow channel, which connects Wellington Channel with Queen's Channel. There the floats of ice lie massed together. Hatteras made several vain attempts to get through the passes to the north of Hamilton Island. The wind was against him, so he was obliged to slip between Hamilton and Cornwallis Islands. He lost there five precious days. The temperature was beginning to fall, and on that day, July 19th, it fell to twenty-six; it rose again the following day, but this anticipation of an Arctic winter had the effect of inducing Hatteras not to delay any longer. The wind kept westerly and was against his vessel; still he was in a hurry to gain the point, where Stewart had found open sea before him. The 19th, he determined to go up the channel at any cost; the wind was dead against the brig, which might have made headway against these violent snow squalls, but Hatteras was obliged to be very sparing of fuel, and the passage was too wide to tow the brig through it. Hatteras, without considering how fatigued his crew was, had recourse to a measure which the whalers sometimes put in practice under the same circumstances. He lowered his boats down to the water's edge, made them fast to both sides, head and stern, and then made his men row with all their might, so as to sweep the vessel forward against the wind.

The *Forward* moved slowly through the channel. We can imagine the grumbling provoked by this sort of labour. Audible complaints soon followed. For four days they progressed in this manner, until on the 23rd of July they succeeded in reaching Baring Island at the entrance of Queen's Channel.

The wind remained obstinately adverse. The crew were worn out. The doctor considered the men's health seriously shaken, and he fancied he could detect symptoms of scurvy among some of them. He neglected nothing, therefore, which could prevent the spreading of this frightful disease, having abundance of lime juice and chalk lozenges at his command.

Hatteras felt he **could** no longer reckon on his men; kindness and persuasion remained ineffectual. He determined, therefore, to have recourse to severity and not to spare Shandon, whom he most distrusted; and even Wall, who, however, did not dare to say much openly. Hatteras had on his side the doctor, Johnson, Bell, and Simpson. These men were devoted to him. Among the uncertain he reckoned Foker, Bolton, Wolston the armourer, and Brunton the chief engineer, who might at any moment turn against him. As for the others, Pen, Gripper, Clifton, and Warren, they openly discussed their mutinous plans; they wanted to bring their comrades over to their side, and compel the *Forward* to return to England.

Hatteras also saw that the continuation of such work as had just been done was not to be expected from a crew of disaffected men, worn out by fatigue. For twenty-four hours he remained in sight of Baring Island without moving a yard. Still the thermometer fell, and the month of July in these high latitudes felt the influence of approaching winter. The 24th, the thermometer fell to twenty-two. Young ice formed in the night, and was often six to eight lines thick. If snow fell it would soon be strong enough to bear the weight of a man. The sea had already acquired that dirty tint which precedes the formation of the first crystals.

Hatteras did not deceive himself about these alarming symptoms. If the passes became closed he would be forced to winter in that spot, far from the object of his voyage, and without having even seen that open sea which, according to the notices of his predecessors, was so near him. He therefore determined at any price to get forward, and gain some degrees northward. So, seeing that he could not have recourse again to oars, with a crew in a state of exhaustion, nor to his sails, with the wind against him, he ordered them to get up steam.





CHAPTER XXII.

THE BEGINNING OF THE MUTINY.

AT this unexpected order great was the surprise on board the *Forward*.

"Light the fires!" said some.

"And what with?" said others.

"When we have only two months' fuel on board!" exclaimed Pen.

"How are we to keep ourselves warm next winter?" cried Gripper.

"We shall have to burn the vessel down to her water line," said Clifton.

"And feed the stove with the masts," returned Warren, "from topgallant masts to jibboom."

Shandon looked steadily at Wall. The bewildered engineers hesitated about going down to the engine-room.

"Did you hear me?" cried the captain, in an angry tone.

Brunton turned towards the hatchway, but stopped as he was about to go down.

"Don't go, Brunton," said a voice.

"Who spoke?" cried Hatteras.

"I," said Pen, moving towards the captain.

"And you said——" asked the latter.

"I say—I say," replied Pen, with a curse, "I say we have had enough of it, that we won't go any farther, and we don't intend to

die of fatigue and cold next winter, and that the fires shall not be lighted."

"Mr. Shandon," said Hatteras, coldly, "put this man in irons."

"But captain," replied Shandon, "what this man has said——"

"What this man has said," replied Hatteras, "if you repeat it, I will have you kept to your cabin with a sentry at the door. Seize that man, do you hear?"

Johnson, Bell, and Simpson advanced to the sailor, who was in a state of fury.

"The first man who lays a hand on me! ——" cried he, picking up a handspike, and brandishing it over his head.

Hatteras walked up to him.

"Pen," said he, very quietly, "move, and I blow your brains out!" As he spoke he cocked a revolver, and pointed it at his head.

A murmur was heard.

"Not a word, men, or this is a dead man!"

At that moment Johnson and Bell disarmed Pen, who made no resistance, and let them take him below.

"Go, Brunton," said Hatteras.

The engineer, followed by Plover and Warren, went down to his station. Hatteras returned to the poop.

"That Pen is a scoundrel!" said the doctor.

"No man ever was nearer death," quietly observed Hatteras.

They soon had sufficient steam up; her anchors were got in, and the *Forward* took a direction eastward towards Beecher Point, cutting the young ice with her steel stem.

There are many islands lying between Baring Island and Beecher Point, stranded as it were in the middle of the ice fields; and the streams were crowded together in the small straits with which this part of the sea is studded. They had a tendency to agglomerate under the influence of a comparatively low temperature; hummocks were forming here and there, and one could feel that the blocks of ice, which were already more compact, denser, and closer together, when the first frosts came would soon form an impenetrable mass.

Thus the *Forward* struggled along through whirlwinds of snow. But with the changeableness which characterizes the atmosphere in these regions, the sun would make its appearance from time to time; the temperature would rise several degrees; obstacles melted away as if by enchantment, and a beautiful sheet of water, delightful to look at, lay where a short time before icebergs were blockading all the passes. The horizon assumed those magnificent orange tints on which the eye rested with pleasure, after the eternal snowy whiteness around.

On Thursday, July 26th, the *Forward* skirted Dundas Island, and set her head more to the north; but then she encountered a field of ice eight or nine feet high, formed of blocks broken off from the coast; so she was obliged to make a bend to the west. The unceasing crashing together of the ice, joined to the groaning of the steamer, caused a dismal sound, like sighs and lamentations. At last the brig found a pass, and with difficulty made her way up it; her passage was often paralysed for hours by some enormous block of ice lying right in her course; the fog interfered with the pilot's look-out; as long as one can see a mile ahead, obstacles are easily avoided, but in the misty squalls it was often impossible for him to see a cable's length, and there was a great swell on.

At last, after six days of tedious navigation, the 1st of August, Point Beecher was made out in the north. Hatteras passed the latter hours in the cross trees; the sea seen by Stewart, the 30th of May, 1851, in latitude seventy-six degrees twenty minutes, could not be far distant, and yet, far as Hatteras could see, he could make out no indication of a polar basin free from ice. He came down from aloft, without saying a word.

"Do you believe in this open sea?" asked Shandon, of the second officer.

"I begin to have my doubts about it," replied Wall.

"Was I not right when I called this pretended discovery nothing but a hypothetical chimera? and no one would believe me, and you Wall, took part against me!"

"But we shall believe what you say in future, Shandon."

"Yes," replied the latter, "when it is too late."

So saying he returned to his cabin, where he had remained shut up almost entirely since his discussion with the captain, which has been already related.

The wind towards evening went round again to the southward. Hatteras let his fires out and set his sails; for several days the working of the ship was most laborious to the crew; at every moment they had to luff or go about; they were more than a week getting to Barrow Point. The *Forward* had not made thirty miles in ten days.

Then the wind changed again to the north, and the crew began to work once more. Hatteras still hoped on to find a sea clear of ice beyond the seventy-seventh parallel, as described by Sir Edward Belcher.

Still, if he trusted to Penny's account, that part of the sea he was at that moment crossing ought to have been clear, or when Penny reached the ice limits, he reconnoitred the border of Queen's Channel as far as the seventy-seventh degree in a boat. Ought he to treat these accounts as apocryphal, or was an earlier winter than usual about to overtake him?

On the 15th, Mount Percy showed its summit through the mist

and the next day the sun set for the first time, thus ending the long series of days of twenty-four hours' duration. The men had got accustomed to this incessant daylight; but the animals felt its influence very little; the Greenland dogs went to sleep at their usual hour, and Duke curled himself up to sleep regularly every evening about the time it ought to have been dark.

Still during the nights following the 15th of August, the darkness was never profound; the sun, though set, gave sufficient light by refraction.

On the 19th they made Cape Franklin on the east, and Cape Lady Franklin on the west coast; thus to the extreme point reached by this hardy navigator, his countrymen's gratitude had desired that the name of his devoted wife should stand opposite to his own.

The doctor was much affected by this circumstance of the moral union of these two points of land.

Following Johnson's advice, he had accustomed himself to a low temperature; he was almost always on deck, braving cold, wind, and snow.

His constitution, although he had grown somewhat thinner, had not suffered from the attacks of that rude climate. Besides he expected greater perils than these, and cheerfully accepted the symptoms which heralded winter.

"See," said he one day to Johnson, "look at those flocks of birds, in flight to the south; what a rate they are flying at, screaming their hoarse farewells."

"Yes, Dr. Clawbonny, something has told them it is time to go, and so they are off."

"More than one of our men, Johnson, would like to imitate them, I believe."

"They have no hearts in the world, Dr. Clawbonny; those creatures don't carry stores with them as we do, and so they must go and find their living elsewhere. But sailors with a good vessel under them ought to go to the end of the world."

"So you hope Hatteras will succeed in his attempt?" asked the doctor.

"He will succeed, Dr. Clawbonny."

"I think he will, too, and should he, in carrying it out, want but one faithful companion——"

"There would be two of us!"

"So there would, Johnson," replied the doctor, pressing his brave companion's hand.

Prince Albert's Land, along which the *Forward* was coasting at that moment, is also called Grinnel's Lands, and though Hatteras, in his hatred to the Yankees, would never have consented to call it so, it is nevertheless that by which it is generally known. This is how it obtained that double appellation; at the time the English captain, Penny, gave it the name of *Prince Albert* the commander of the *Rescue*, Lieutenant Haven, called it Grinnel's land in honour of the

American merchant at New York, who bore all the expense of the expedition.

The brig in its course experienced a continuance of very great difficulties, sometimes under sail, at others under steam. On the 18th of August, they made out Mount Britannia, hardly visible in the mist, and the *Forward* let go her anchor in Northumberland Bay. She was beset on all sides.





CHAPTER XXIII.

THE ATTACK OF THE ICEBERGS.

AFTER anchoring his ship, Hatteras returned to his cabin, took his chart and carefully marked off his own position. He found himself in latitude, seventy-six degrees fifty-seven minutes, and longitude, ninety-nine degrees twenty-nine minutes; that is to say, only three minutes distant from the seventy-seventh parallel. It was at this very spot that Sir Edward Belcher passed his first winter in the *Pioneer* and *Assistance*. It was from this point that he arranged his excursions by boat and in the sledge. He discovered Table Island, North Cornwall, Victoria Archipelago, and Belcher Channel. When he got beyond the seventy-eighth parallel he saw the coast trended to the south-east. It seemed inclined to connect itself with Jones's Strait, the entrance into which lies in Baffin's Bay. But to the north-west, on the contrary, an open sea, says his report, extended as far as the eye could see.

Hatteras anxiously considered that part of the chart in which a large white space indicated these unknown regions, and his eyes fell again and again on that polar basin free from ice.

"After the testimony of so many witnesses, after Stewart's account, and that of Penny and Belcher, doubt is no longer possible! It must be so! Those hardy seamen have seen it, seen it with their own eyes! Can one venture to doubt their assertion? No——. But if, notwithstanding, this sea, then open in consequence of an early winter, should be—— No, it was at several years' interval that these discoveries were made; that basin does exist, and I shall find it and see it."

Thus argued Hatteras: he then went on the poop. A thick mist enveloped the *Forward*; from the top her topgallant-mast-heads

were hardly visible. He called the ice master down from the crow's nest and took his place; he hoped to profit by an interval of clear weather to examine the horizon to the north-west.

Shandon did not miss this opportunity of saying to Wall —

“Well, where is this open sea?”

“You were right, Shandon, and we have only six weeks' coal on board.”

“The doctor must find some scientific process,” replied Shandon, “to keep us warm without fuel. I have heard say that one can make ice with fire, perhaps he can make fire with ice.”

Shandon returned to his cabin, shrugging his shoulders.

The next day, the 20th, the fog parted for a few instants. They could see Hatteras from his elevated position carefully reconnoitring the horizon; then he came down without saying a word, and ordered them to weigh anchor; but it was easy to see that his hopes were again disappointed.

The *Forward* weighed, and resumed her uncertain course northward. As she laboured a good deal the topsail and topgallant-sail yards, with their rigging, were sent down on deck; the top-masts were struck; they could no longer reckon on the wind, which the winding nature of the passes rendered nearly useless; large whitish spots formed here and there on the sea, resembling spots of oil; they were forerunners of an impending frost; as soon as the wind fell the sea began to freeze at once; but with the rise of the wind this young sea broke up and disappeared. Towards evening the thermometer fell to seventeen.

When the brig arrived at the end of some closed-up passage, it acted like a ram and charged the obstacle at full speed, which she sunk. Sometimes they thought she was stopped for good, but some unexpected movement of the ice streams would open a way for her, and she steamed boldly on. During these stoppages the steam became condensed in the cold air, and fell in snow on the deck. Another cause also suspended the brig's advance; sometimes icicles formed in the fans of the screw, and they were so hard that all the efforts of the engine were unable to break them off; it was then necessary to back the engine, and send men to clear the fans with axes; hence difficulties and delays. Such was the state of things for thirteen days, while the *Forward* dragged herself with much trouble through Penny Strait.

The crew grumbled while they obeyed orders; they saw it was now impossible to return. Getting northward was less dangerous than retreating southward. All they had to think about now was where they should winter.

The men discussed this new position among themselves, and one day they spoke of it to Richard Shandon, whom they knew to be of their opinion. The latter, forgetful of his duty as officer, did not hesitate to allow the captain's authority to be questioned in his presence.

"So you say, Mr. Shandon," asked Gripper, "that it is now impossible for us to go back?"

"It is too late now," replied Shandon.

"Then," observed another sailor, "all we have to do now is to look out for winter quarters."

"That is our only resource! I was not believed——"

"Another time," replied Pen, who had returned to his duty, "they shall believe you."

"As I am not master——" began Shandon.

"Who knows?" returned Pen. "John Hatteras is free to go as far as he likes, but we are not obliged to follow him."

"He ought to remember his first voyage to Baffin's Bay," said Gripper, "and what came of it."

"And the *Farewell's* voyage," said Clifton, "which was lost in the Spitzbergen seas under his command."

"And he came back the only survivor," replied Gripper.

"He and his dog," added Clifton.

"We are not inclined to sacrifice ourselves for this man's pleasure," added Pen.

"Nor to lose the bounty we have so well earned." It is needless to add that this observation was Clifton's.

"When we shall have passed the seventy-eighth degree," added he, "and we are not far from it, it will make just three hundred and seventy-five pounds a man."

"But," replied Gripper, "shall we not forfeit them if we go back without the captain?"

"No," said Clifton, "if we can prove our return was absolutely necessary."

"But the captain—still——"

"Never mind, Gripper," said Pen, "we shall have a captain and a good one: Mr. Shandon knows him. When one commander goes mad he is broken, and his command given to another. Is it not so, Mr. Shandon?"

"My friends," replied Shandon, evasively, "you will always find in me a heart devoted to your interests. But let us wait awhile."

As may be seen, the storm was gathering over Hatteras. Altogether he had done very well; the route he had gone in five months represented a route which other navigators had required two or three years to follow. Hatteras was now obliged to winter out, but this situation ought not to terrify men of any courage and character; did not Sir John Ross and McClure pass three successive winters in the Arctic regions? What had been done once could very well be done again.

"Certainly it could," Hatteras would repeat, "and more, if necessary! Ah," said he, regretfully, to the doctor, "why did I not force Smith's Passage to the north of Baffin's Bay! I should now be at the pole."

"Good!" replied the doctor invariably, who was capable of in-

venting confidence, if necessary. "We shall get there, captain; under the ninety-ninth meridian instead of the seventy-fifth, it is true; but what does it matter? If all roads lead to Rome, it is still more certain that every meridian leads to the pole."

The 31st of August the thermometer marked thirteen degrees. The end of the navigable season was come. The *Forward* left Exmouth Island on her starboard bow, and three days afterwards passed Table Island, in the middle of Beechey Channel. At a less advanced period of the year, it might have been possible perhaps to regain Baffin's Bay by this channel, but at that time it was not to be thought of. This arm of the sea, entirely closed up with ice, would not have afforded an inch of water under the *Forward's* keel; the look-out for the next eight months would only be over an endless extent of motionless fields of ice.

Fortunately they could still advance some minutes farther north, but to do so they would have to break it up with large rollers or blast it with mines.

What they dreaded the most in these low temperatures was a still atmosphere, for the passes froze quickly, and contrary winds were preferable—one calm night and everything was frozen.

Now the *Forward* could not winter in her actual position, exposed to winds, icebergs and the drift of the channel; safe shelter was the first thing to be considered. Hatteras hoped to gain the coast of New Cornwall, and there, beyond Albert Point, fall in with some sheltered bay of refuge. So he continued his course northward most perseveringly.

But on the 8th of September an impassable, impenetrable ice bank lay between him and the north; the temperature was at ten degrees. Hatteras vainly attempted to get through. In doing so he risked losing his vessel several times, and only his extreme skill extricated him. The *Forward's* situation became really perilous, the sea was closing up behind her, and in the space of a few hours it became so hard that the crew could walk on it and drag the vessel along without danger.

Not being able to go round the obstacle, Hatteras determined to attack it in front by blasting, as it was impossible to saw through, as the cuts froze together again immediately. Under any circumstances Hatteras hoped to pass the following day.

But it blew hard in the night, the sea rose under her frozen crust as if shaken by some submarine disturbance, and the terrified pilot was heard hailing—

"Look out abaft!"

Hatteras looked in the direction indicated, and what he saw in the twilight was not reassuring.

A tall iceberg, driven back to the north, was coming down on the ship with the rapidity of an avalanche.

"All hands on deck!" cried the captain.

The rolling mountain was hardly half a mile distant; blocks of

ice were tumbled one upon another, and like enormous grains of sand borne on the wings of a hurricane; a fearful noise filled the atmosphere.

"There, Dr. Clawbonny," cried Johnson, "this is the greatest danger we have been in yet."

"Yes," replied the doctor, quietly, "it is frightful enough."

"It is an attack and we shall have to repulse it," returned the boatswain.

"One would say it was a troop of immense antediluvian animals, such as are supposed to inhabit the pole. They are trying which shall arrive the soonest."

"And," added Johnson, "there are some armed with pointed lances. I should advise you to keep clear of them."

"It is a siege, indeed! Well, we had better get on the ramparts," and he hurried aft, where the crew, armed with handspikes, poles, and iron bars were standing prepared to repulse this formidable assault.

The avalanche came closer, and became loftier by the addition of the surrounding ice which it brought with it in its vortex. Hatteras ordered the forecastle gun to fire with ball, in order to break this threatening line. But onward it came and fell against the brig, striking her on the starboard beam; a crash was heard and part of her rail was stove in.

"Let no one stir!" cried Hatteras; "look out for the ice!"

Lumps of ice weighing half a hundredweight each fell on the vessel's deck; smaller ones thrown up as high as the yards, fell in splinters, carrying away the shrouds and breaking the rigging. The crew were boarded by these innumerable enemies, which by their weight would have crushed a hundred vessels like the *Forward*. They all did their best, and some of them were badly hurt; Bolton had his left shoulder torn open. The noise was frightful, and the darkness of the night added to the horrors of the situation, without concealing the blocks of ice, whose whiteness reflected the last scattered gleams of light.

The voice of Hatteras in command could be heard above all this disturbance. The ship obeying this enormous pressure leaned over to port, and the ends of her mainyard were already touching the field of ice at the risk of carrying her mast away.

Hatteras saw the danger. It was a fearful moment. The brig seemed about to capsize, and then she would lose all her spars. An enormous block, as large as the vessel herself, seemed to hang over her hull; it rose gradually and was already past the poop; if it fell on the *Forward* it was all over with her. Then it turned upright, its height towering above the spars of the ship, while it rocked on its base.

A cry of terror escaped the men. Every one crept over to starboard. But at that moment the vessel was eased, she was lifted up, and for a single moment seemed to float in the air. Then she turned

on one side and fell back again on the blocks of ice, and then began to roll till all her timbers creaked again. After a minute, which seemed an age, she fell on the other side of the obstacle, broke through it with her weight, and found herself once more in her natural element.

"She has cleared the ice bank," cried Johnson, who was in the vessel's bows.

"Thank God for it!" said Hatteras.

The brig now found herself in the middle of an ice basin, which surrounded her on every side, and though her keel was in the water, she could not move; but though she was motionless, the ice field carried her along with it.

"We are drifting, captain," said Johnson.

"Never mind," replied Hatteras.

It would not have been possible under any circumstances to prevent it. When day broke it was evident that under the influence of some submarine current, the bank of ice was rapidly drifting towards the north. This floating mass was taking the *Forward* with it, imbedded in an ice field, of which no one could see the limit. In anticipation of some catastrophe, either from the brig being cast ashore or crushed between masses of ice, Hatteras caused a quantity of provisions and encampment materials to be brought on deck, as also clothes and blankets for the crew. Following Captain McClure's example under similar circumstances, he surrounded the brig with a belt of hammocks filled with air, so as to protect her from any great injury. Ice soon began to accumulate under a temperature of seven degrees, and the vessel was surrounded by a wall of ice as high as her topmast.

For a week they cruised about in this fashion. Albert Point, which forms the western extremity of New Cornwall, was sighted on the 10th of September, but soon lost sight of again. It was remarked that from that moment the ice field took a direction eastward. The crew waited with folded arms where it would take them. At last, on the 15th of September, about three in the afternoon, the ice field, having, no doubt, fouled another one, stopped suddenly, giving the vessel a violent shock. Hatteras consulted his chart; he was in the north, no land in sight, in ninety-five degrees thirty-five minutes longitude, and seventy-eight degrees fifteen minutes latitude, in the centre of that region, of that unknown sea, where geographers have placed the frozen pole.





CHAPTER XXIV.

PREPARATIONS FOR WINTERING.

THE southern hemisphere is colder in parallel latitudes than the northern; but the temperature of the new continent is still fifteen degrees below that of other parts of the world, and in America these regions, known under the name of the frozen pole, are the most to be dreaded.

The average temperature for the whole year is only two degrees below zero. Scientific men, among them Dr. Clawbonny, explain it thus :—

The winds which blow with the greatest strength in the northern regions of America are those from the south-west; they come from the Pacific Ocean with an equal and supportable temperature; but to arrive in the Arctic seas they have to traverse the vast American territory, covered with snow, consequently they become chilled by contact with it, and cover the hyperborean regions with their frigid effect.

Hatteras found himself at the frozen pole, beyond the regions visited by his predecessors. He, therefore, had to expect a terrible winter, on board a vessel lost amidst the ice, and with a crew almost in a state of mutiny. He determined to face these dangers with his habitual resolution, for he looked his situation in the face with his eyes open.

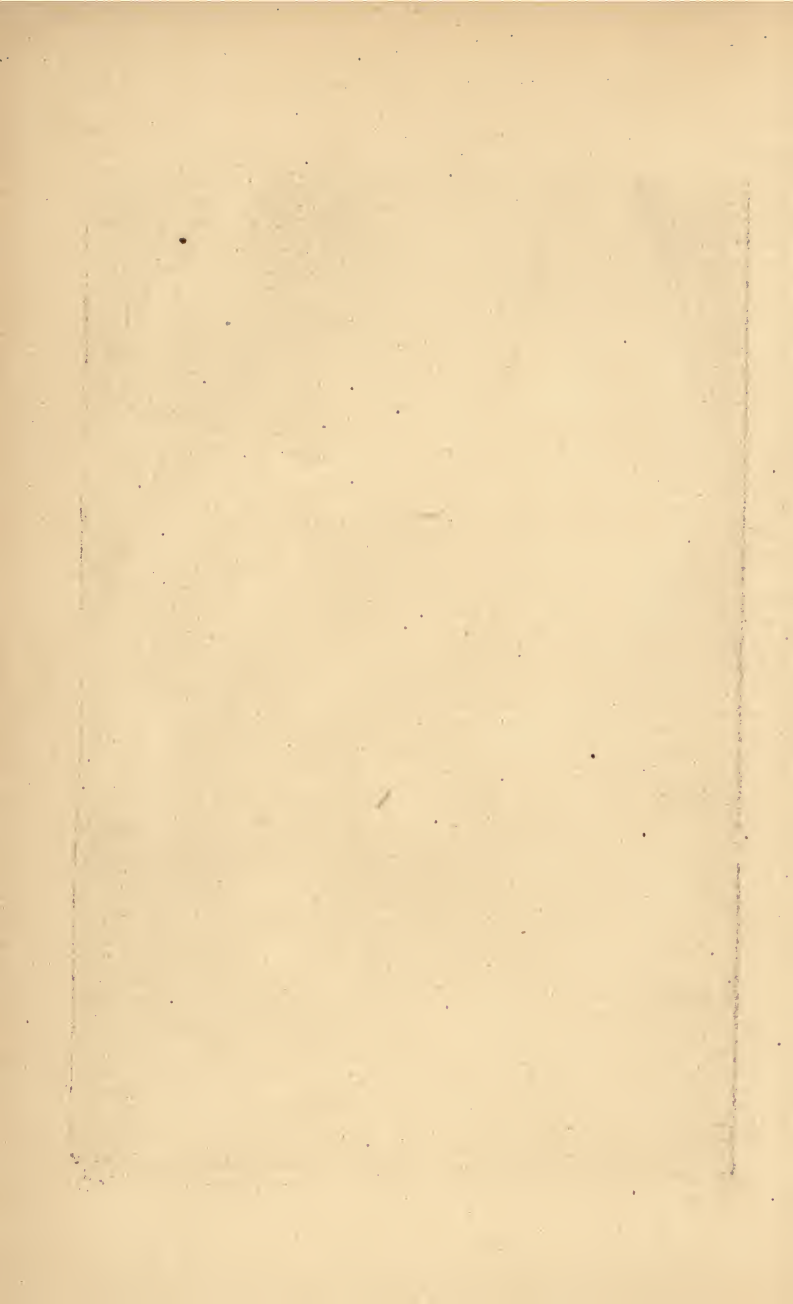
He began by taking, aided by Johnson's experience, all the measures necessary for wintering. According to his calculation, the *Forward* had drifted about two hundred and fifty miles from the nearest land, that is, New Cornwall. He was shut up in a field of ice as in a bed of granite, and no human power could extricate him.

There was not a drop of open water at that moment in these vast seas struck by the Arctic winter. Ice fields only were to be seen as far as the eye could reach; but they did not all present an even



The Forward's berth for winter.

Captain Hatteras.



surface. Far from it. Numerous icebergs rose from the frozen surface, and the *Forward* found herself sheltered by the highest among them on three points of the compass; the south-east wind only blew on her. If one could substitute rocks for icebergs, a green sward instead of snow, and the sea in its liquid state, then the brig would have been quietly lying at anchor in a lovely bay sheltered from the violence of the winds. But in this latitude, what a scene of desolation! what a miserable aspect nature presents!

They were obliged to get the brig's anchors out on the ice as a precaution against submarine currents. Johnson, when he learnt they were so near the frozen pole, observed most rigorously every precaution necessary.

"We shall have a rude winter," said he to the doctor; "this is just the captain's luck, to get nipped in the most disagreeable spot on the whole surface of the globe. Never mind, we shall get out again."

The doctor was at heart delighted with the situation. He would not have changed with any one. Winter at the frozen pole, what luck!

Out-of-door work first occupied the crew. The sails were left bent instead of being stowed away in the hold, as was once the practice; their covers were put on, and the ice soon sealed them up in a weather tight envelope, and the crow's nest was left in its place. It was a natural observatory. The running rigging alone was unrove. It became necessary to cut away the ice round the vessel, as the ice blocks clinging to her were of considerable weight; and she was not resting on the water. This was a long and troublesome job; but in a few days the hull was freed from its prison and they took advantage of it to examine her; she had suffered no injury to her frame, but she had lost nearly all her copper. When the vessel was free she rose nearly nine inches; the crew then cut her a berth in the ice, which having joined again under her keel kept them from all fear of her being crushed in future.

The doctor took his part in all this work; he handled the snow spade well; his good humour amused the men: he taught others and himself also. He very much approved of the arrangement of the ice under the ship.

"That is a very useful precaution," said he.

"Without that, Dr. Clawbonny, she could not have resisted the pressure. Now we can build a wall of snow without fear, as high as the gunwale; and if we like we can make it ten feet thick, there is no want of material."

"An excellent idea," said the doctor, "snow is a bad conductor of heat; it reflects instead of absorbing, and the temperature within cannot escape."

"Very true," said Johnson; "we are raising a fortification against cold, and against animals also, should they take it into their heads to pay us a visit; you will see how well it will turn out

when it is finished ; we shall cut two flights of steps in this mass of snow, one at the bow and one at the stern of the ship ; when the steps are once cut we will pour water on them, which will render them as hard as rock itself."

It must be allowed, it is fortunate that cold engenders snow and ice, and so gives us the means of protection against itself.

In fact the vessel was destined to disappear under a thick layer of ice, to which the preservation of its interior temperature was owing ; a roof of thickly tarred canvas, covered again with snow, was put up the whole length of the deck ; the canvas hung down low enough to cover the vessel's sides. The deck being thus sheltered from all exterior influence became an excellent promenade ; it was covered two feet and a half thick with snow beaten down till it became quite hard—another obstacle to the radiation of interior heat, then they put a layer of sand upon it.

"A little more," said the doctor, "and, with a few trees, I could fancy myself in Hyde Park or even in the hanging gardens of Babylon."

They made a well close to the brig, which was kept always open. They broke the ice every morning—it was to supply them with water in case of fire, and for the baths frequently ordered for the crew to keep them in health. They drew their water from a greater depth where it is less cold in order to spare fuel ; they obtained this result by means of an invention of a French *savant*, François Arago. This apparatus, when at a certain depth, allowed the water to flow into it by means of a movable double bottom in a cylinder.

In winter everything which encumbers a ship is generally removed and deposited in magazines ashore. But what can be practised near the shore is impossible when a vessel is anchored in an ice field.

Everything below was arranged to combat the two great enemies in these latitudes, cold and damp. The first brought the second, which is still more to be dreaded, with it ; one can resist cold, but must give way to damp ; they both therefore had to be guarded against.

The *Forward*, having been fitted for navigating the Arctic seas, was well arranged ; for that purpose the large cabin for the crew was admirably adapted ; no corners were allowed in which damp first takes refuge ; if it had been circular it would have suited better as a common dwelling-room for the crew, but still heated by a large stove and well ventilated, it was very comfortable ; the bulkheads were hung with deer skins, and not with woollen stuff, for wool holds the moisture which condenses in it, and impregnates the atmosphere with humidity.

The partitions were taken down on the poop, and the officers had a common room, larger, better ventilated, and warmed by a stove. This room, like that of the men, had an antechamber which cut off all direct communication with the exterior. Thus no heat would be

lost, and one passed gradually from one temperature to another. Clothes wet with snow were left outside, and they scraped their feet before coming inside that they might bring no element of disease in with them.

Canvas hose conveyed the air necessary to make the stoves draw, and others allowed the steam to escape; condensers were also established in the two rooms, which took up this vapour instead of allowing it to condense; they were emptied twice a week, and they contained sometimes several bushels of ice. This was so much gained from the enemy.

The fire could be easily and perfectly regulated by air-pipes; it was known that a very small quantity of coal was required to keep up a temperature of fifty degrees. But Hatteras, after visiting his coal bunkers, saw clearly that, even with the greatest economy, he had only two months' fuel left.

A place was prepared to dry the clothes, which required frequent washing; they could not be dried in the air as they became hard and brittle.

The more delicate parts of the engine were also taken to pieces, and the engine-room itself was hermetically closed.

Life on board was an object of much serious reflection. Hatteras regulated it most carefully, and rules were hung up in the common room. The men turned out at six, the hammocks were aired three times a week, the floor of the two rooms was rubbed every morning with hot sand. Scalding hot tea was an item at every meal, and their food varied as much as possible according to the days of the week; it consisted of bread, flour, beef suet, and raisins for puddings, sugar, cocoa, tea, rice, lemon juice, preserved meat, salt beef, and salt pork, pickled cabbages, and other vegetables. The kitchen was outside the common rooms. They lost the heat arising from it, but cooking was a constant source of evaporation and damp.

Men's health depends greatly on the food they eat. In these high latitudes they ought to consume as much animal food as possible. The doctor had presided at the drawing up of the alimentary programme.

"We must take example from the Esquimaux," said he. "They have learned their lesson from nature, and in that respect are our masters. If Arabs and Africans can content themselves with a handful of rice, or a few dates, here it is important to eat a great deal. The Esquimaux absorb from ten to fifteen pounds of oil a day. If you do not like such a diet we must have recourse to matters rich in sugar and fat. In a word, we must have carbon, so let us make carbon. It is all very well to put coals in the stove, but we must not forget the valuable stove we all carry inside us."

Strict attention was also paid to cleanliness; every man was obliged to take a bath in this half-frozen water from the fire main every two days, an excellent means of preserving natural heat. The

doctor set the example. He did it at first because it must be very disagreeable, but that excuse soon failed him, for at last he found this healthful dip exceedingly pleasant.

When anything was to be done out of doors they had to be very careful not to be frost-bitten; should such a thing happen they hastened to rub the part affected with snow to restore the circulation of the blood. The men were also clothed all over in woollen hose, and wore hoods of buckskin and sealskin trousers, which were completely air-tight and water-tight. These various arrangements on board occupied three weeks, and they reached the 10th of October without any remarkable incident.





CHAPTER XXV.

ONE OF SIR JAMES ROSS'S OLD FOXES.

THAT day the thermometer fell to three degrees below zero. The weather was calm, and the cold was very endurable in the absence of wind. Hatteras, profiting by the clearness of the atmosphere, went out to reconnoitre the surrounding plains. He ascended to the top of one of the highest icebergs towards the north, but the field glass of his telescope took in nothing but a succession of icebergs and ice fields; no land in sight but the image of chaos in its saddest aspect. He returned on board trying to calculate the probable length of his captivity.

The sportsmen, and among them the doctor, Wall, Simpson, Johnson, and Bell, did not fail to provide the ship with fresh meat. Birds had disappeared, seeking less rigorous climates in the south. Ptarmigan alone braved the winter; they were easily killed, and their great number promised a plentiful supply of game.

Hares, foxes, wolves, ermine, and bears, were numerous. An English, French, or Norwegian sportsman, would have had no cause of complaint, but these animals were very shy and difficult to get near, and it was not easy to distinguish them in those white plains, for before the great frosts arrive they change colour, and put on their winter fur. The doctor proved, contrary to the opinion of certain naturalists, that this change did not arise from the great fall in the temperature, for it took place before the month of October, and did not result from any physical cause, but from a precaution of Providence, which put Arctic animals in a position to brave the rigour of an Arctic winter.

They often fell in with seals, or sea-dogs, and the sportsmen were particularly recommended to take as many as possible, both for their skins, and also for their oil, which is so well adapted for fuel. The liver of these animals is also very good to eat. They could

count them by hundreds, and two or three miles to the north of the ship the ice was perforated in places by these enormous amphibious creatures ; but they could wound the sportsman at a great distance, and many were wounded, which made their escape with ease by plunging under the ice.

At last, on the 19th, Simpson succeeded in killing one, about four hundred yards from the ship. He had taken the precaution of stopping his hole up, so that the animal was at his mercy. He received several shots and was killed by a blow on the nose. He was nine feet long : and his bull-dog head, the sixteen teeth in his jaws, his large pectoral fins in the shape of pinions, his small tail, supplied with another pair of fins, made him a magnificent specimen of the sea-dog family. The doctor, wishing to preserve his head for his collection of natural history, and his skin for future wants, prepared them both by very quick and inexpensive means. He dipped the animal's body in the fire main, and thousands of small prawns soon devoured all the flesh ; in half a day the work was done, and the cleverest furrier in Liverpool could not have succeeded better.

As soon as the sun had passed the autumnal equinox, that is to say, on the 23rd of September, it may be said winter begins in the Arctic regions. This beneficial luminary, after having by degrees descended below the horizon, at last disappeared on the 23rd of October, just lighting up the crests of the icebergs with his oblique rays. The doctor bid him a traveller's farewell ; he was not to see him again before the month of February.

It must not, however, be supposed that the obscurity was complete during this long absence of the sun ; the moon came every month to replace it, as far as lay in her power. There is bright star-light, the brilliancy of the planets, frequent appearances of aurora borealis, and refractions peculiar to horizons white with snow ; besides, the sun, at the epoch of his greatest southern declination, approaches within thirteen degrees of the polar horizon, so that every day there is a certain twilight which lasts several hours. But fog and whirlwinds of snow often plunged these cold regions into the most complete obscurity.

But, up to this time, the weather had been tolerably favourable ; partridges and hares alone had cause to complain, for the sportsmen did not give them a moment's rest. They set several traps for foxes, but these suspicious animals were not to be caught ; many a time they scratched the snow away from under the traps and got at the bait without any risk ; the doctor often wished them at the other pole.

On the 25th of October the thermometer stood at four degrees above zero. A violent hurricane of wind began to blow, a thick fall of snow filled the atmosphere, preventing a single ray of light arriving at the *Forward*. For several hours there was a great anxiety felt about Bell and Simpson, who had been drawn too far,

while hunting, from the ship; it was only the following day that they returned on board, after remaining a whole day lying in the snow in their deerskins, while the hurricane swept over them, and buried them under five feet of snow. They were nearly frozen, and the doctor had some trouble in restoring the circulation of the blood in them.

The storm lasted eight long days without interruption. No one could venture outside. In one day there were from fifteen to twenty degrees difference in the temperature.

During this enforced leisure each lived after his own fashion,—some sleeping, some smoking, others whispering together, and interrupting themselves when either the doctor or Johnson approached. There was no moral bond of union among the men of this crew; they only met at evening prayer, and on Sunday, when the Bible and the regular Church Service were read.

Clifton had kept a correct account that as soon as the seventy-eighth parallel was reached his share of the bounty would amount to three hundred and seventy-five pounds. He thought it was a large sum, and his ambition went no farther. Most of the men thought as he did, and their only care was to enjoy this fortune which they had acquired at the price of so much fatigue.

Hatteras remained almost invisible. He never went out to shoot, nor to walk; he took not the slightest interest in the meteorological phenomena which so greatly excited the doctor's admiration. He lived for one idea only, expressed in three words, "The North Pole!" He only looked forward to the moment when his vessel, at last at liberty, would be able to resume her adventurous course.

During these unoccupied hours the doctor arranged his notes of the voyage, of which this is a faithful repetition. He was never idle, and the evenness of his temper never failed him. He certainly was glad when the storm ceased, and soon began his usual hunting expeditions again.

On the 3rd of November, at six in the morning, and with a temperature of five degrees below zero, he set out, accompanied by Johnson and Bell. The ice plains were smooth, the snow, which had fallen in abundance the preceding days, and solidified by frost, made it very good walking. A dry penetrating cold pervaded the atmosphere; the moon shone most brilliantly, and threw an extraordinary light on the smallest inequalities of the ground, the edges of their footmarks in the snow, lighted up by it, left a line of light along the path the hunters had taken, while their lengthened shadows fell on the ice with surprising distinctness.

The doctor had taken his friend Duke with him: he preferred him for hunting to the Greenland dogs, and with reason; the latter are of little use for that purpose, and seem altogether without that quality of the breed of more temperate zones. Duke often made a point at the fresh tracks of a bear, but, notwithstanding his

ability, the hunters had not found even a hare, after walking for four hours.

"Does the game also feel the necessity of emigrating to the south?" said the doctor, halting at the foot of a hummock.

"One would think so, Dr. Clawbonny," replied the carpenter.

"I don't think so for my part," said Johnson: "hares, foxes, and bears are made for these climates. In my opinion the last storm drove them away, but with a southerly wind they will soon be back again. It would be quite another thing if you were to talk of reindeer or musk-oxen."

"Still, at Melville Island these animals are found in troops," replied the doctor; "that island lies more to the south it is true, and, while he wintered there, Parry had plenty of this magnificent game at his disposal."

"We are much less favoured here," said Bell, "and if we could only get some bear's meat we should not have much to complain of."

"That is just the difficulty," replied the doctor; "the bears seem very scarce and very shy; they are not civilized enough to come within shot."

"Bell talks about bear's meat, but bear's fat is much more wanted now than his flesh or his skin."

"You are right, Johnson," replied Bell; "you are always thinking about fuel."

"How can we help thinking about it? Even by practising the strictest economy, we have only enough left for three weeks!"

"Yes," observed the doctor, "our greatest danger lies there, for we are only at the beginning of November, and February is the coldest month in the year at the frozen zone; however, if we cannot get bear's grease we may reckon on seal oil."

"Not for long, Dr. Clawbonny," replied Johnson, "these animals will soon abandon us too! Either from cold or fear, they will soon be no longer seen on the ice."

"Then," said the doctor, "I see we shall be obliged to fall back on the bears, and, I confess, it is really the most useful animal in these regions, for he alone supplies us with food, clothing, light, and the fuel so necessary to man. Do you hear, Duke?" continued the doctor, caressing the dog, "we want a bear; try and find one."

Duke was smelling along the ice at that moment, and excited by the voice and caresses of the doctor set off at once. He barked as he went, and though he was at some distance the hunters could hear him distinctly.

The distance sound is conveyed in low temperatures is very surprising; it is only equalled by the clearness of the constellations in the sky; rays of light and sound are carried to a considerable distance in the dry cold of a northern night.

The hunters guided by this distant bark, hurried after Duke;

they had to run a mile, and they arrived out of breath, for the lungs are soon exhausted in such an atmosphere. Duke remained pointing about fifty yards from an enormous mass which was on the top of a hillock.

"Just what we wanted," said the doctor, cocking his gun.

"A bear, and a fine one," cried Bell, following the doctor's example.

"An odd-looking bear," said Johnson, reserving his fire.

Duke was barking furiously. Bell advanced about ten yards and fired, but the animal did not seem to have been hit, for he continued slowly moving his head.

Johnson in his turn went nearer still, and then fired after taking a careful aim.

"Good," said the doctor; "not down yet. It is that confounded refraction; we are a long way out of range; that bear is more than a thousand yards distant."

"Forward," said Bell.

They ran quickly on towards the beast, which seemed to have been in no wise disturbed by their fire. It seemed to be a very large one, and without thinking about danger, the hunters, as soon as they arrived within a reasonable distance, fired; the bear, no doubt mortally wounded, made a spring and fell down at the foot of the hillock.

Duke sprang at him.

"It did not take much to kill that bear," said the doctor.

"Only three shots and down he came," said Bell, with a continuous air.

"It is odd, to say the least of it," observed Johnson.

"Unless we came up just as he was going to die of old age," replied the doctor, laughing.

While they were talking, the hunters arrived at the hillock, and to their great astonishment they found Duke shaking the carcass of a white fox.

"Ah, but that is rather too much," cried Bell.

"We shoot at a bear, and down comes a fox," said the doctor.

Johnson was quite at a loss what to say.

"My friends," said the doctor, "the refraction has deceived us in the size of the animal as well as in the distance we were from it. A similar mistake has often been made by hunters under similar circumstances."

"Well," answered Johnson, "bear or fox, we will eat him all the same."

But just as the boatswain was about to throw the animal on his shoulder, he called out—

"This is the strangest part of the whole business."

"What is?" asked Dr. Clawbonny.

"Look there, sir, do you see there is a collar round the animal's neck?"

"A collar?" replied the doctor, leaning down to look at the animal.

In fact a half-worn copper collar was visible through the fox's white fur; the doctor thought he could make out some letters engraved on it; he quickly took it off and examined it.

"What does it say?" asked Johnson.

"It means, my friends, we have just killed an old fox which was caught by Sir James Ross twelve years ago, in 1848."

"Is it possible?" cried Bell.

"There can be no doubt of it, and I am sorry we shot the poor animal. While wintering, James Ross had the idea of catching a great number of white foxes; they fastened brass collars round their necks on which was engraved the situation of his ships, the *Enterprise* and *Investigator*, and also the depot of stores. These animals go over an immense extent of ground in quest of food, and Sir James hoped that one of them might fall into the hands of Franklin's expedition. That is the true explanation of it, and that poor brute, which might have been the salvation of two crews, has fallen a useless victim to our balls."

"Well, we won't eat him," said Johnson; "a fox twelve years old. No—but we will keep his skin as a proof of this curious incident."

Johnson carried the animal on his shoulder.

The hunters made the best of their way to the ship, guided by the stars; their expedition had not been entirely fruitless, for on their way they shot several brace of ptarmigan.

An hour before they reached the ship, a phenomenon showed itself which greatly astonished the doctor. It was a positive shower of falling stars; they might have been counted by millions, like rockets in the centre-piece of a firework. The light of the moon paled before them.

The eye could never tire of admiring this spectacle, which lasted several hours. Similar meteors were observed in Greenland by the Moravian Brothers, in 1799. It would seem as if the sky was treating the land under these desolate latitudes to *apête*. The doctor, on his return to the ship, passed the night in contemplating this phenomenon, which only ceased about seven in the morning, amidst the most profound stillness of the atmosphere.





CHAPTER XXVI.

THE LAST MORSEL OF COAL.

IT seemed no bears were to be killed. A few seals were taken during the 4th and 5th of November; then the wind having changed, the temperature rose several degrees; but snowstorms began again with excessive violence. It became impossible to leave the ship, and it gave them great trouble to keep out the damp. At the end of the week the condensers gave several bushels of ice.

On the 15th of November the weather changed again, and the thermometer fell to twenty-four degrees below zero. It was the lowest temperature observed hitherto. This cold would have been bearable in a still atmosphere, but the wind blew, and it seemed as if the air was full of knife-blades.

The doctor greatly regretted being kept a prisoner, for the snow, hardened by the wind, made the ground easy to walk on, and he wanted to make some long excursions.

But violent exercise in such cold quickly brings on loss of breath. A man cannot then do a fourth of his usual work. It is impossible to handle iron implements; if the hand touches them without precaution it feels a burning sensation, and bits of skin remain sticking to the object just touched.

The crew confined to the ship were reduced to a two hours' walk on the covered deck, where they had leave to smoke, which was not allowed in the common room.

There, directly the fire got rather low, ice invaded the walls and the joints in the flooring; there was not a screw, or iron nail, or metal plate, which was not immediately covered with a coating of ice. The instantaneousness of this quite amazed the doctor. The men's breath condensed in the air, and fell round them converted

into snow. Only a few feet from the stove the cold was as strong as elsewhere, and the men kept in a close group by it. But the doctor advised them to face the cold, and become habituated to this temperature, which assuredly had not yet done its worst. He advised them to accustom their skin by degrees to its cutting effects, and set them an example; but indolence and torpor kept most of them at their post; they would not stir, but preferred going to sleep in this unhealthy warmth.

As for John Hatteras, he did not seem to feel the effects of this temperature, he walked about in silence as usual. Had the cold taken any effect on his energetic constitution? Did he possess in a supreme degree that principle of natural heat which he had required in his men? Was he so steeled in his fixed idea as to be able to withdraw himself from exterior impressions? His men did not see facing twenty-four degrees of cold below zero; he used to leave the vessel for hours together, and come back without showing the slightest mark of cold in his face.

"He is a strange man," said the doctor to Johnson; "he is a marvel to me; he carries a hot stove about with him; he is one of the most powerful natures I ever studied."

"The fact is," replied Johnson, "he comes and goes, and moves about in the open air without being clothed more warmly than he was in the month of June."

"The question of clothing matters but little, Johnson; it is of no use to clothe a man warmly who cannot generate heat himself. It is like trying to warm a piece of ice by wrapping it up in flannel. But Hatteras has no need of that; it is his nature, and I should not be surprised if he were as warm round his ribs as a hot coal."

Johnson, whose duty it was to see that the fire main was clear every morning, reported that the ice was more than ten feet thick.

Nearly every night the doctor was able to observe a magnificent aurora borealis from four to eight in the evening. The sky became slightly coloured towards the north, then the colouring took the regular form of a pale yellow border, the extremities of which seemed to form an arch on the ice field. By degrees a brilliant zone rose in the sky following the magnetic meridian, and appeared striped with blackish bands; jets of luminous matter flew up, augmenting or diminishing in brilliancy; the meteor, when arrived at its zenith, was often composed of several arcs bathed in red, yellow, or green light. It was a most dazzling spectacle. Soon the different curves united in one point, and formed northern crowns of quite a celestial splendour. At last the arcs became confounded together, the aurora grew pale, the intense rays faded away into pale and vague light, and the marvellous phenomenon weakened, and, nearly extinct, faded away invisibly into the dark clouds of the south. Numerous paraselenæ also appeared during the stay of the moon; several images of her were seen in the sky, increasing her brilliancy. Often also lunar halos surrounded her, as she shone

the centre of a luminous circle, with singular intensity. On the 26th of November there was a very high tide, and the water came rushing up through the fire main; the thick crust of ice was shaken by the rising sea, and fearful crackings announced the submarine struggle; fortunately the vessel remained steady in her bed, her chains only worked rather noisily; besides, in anticipation of such an event, Hatteras had made them secure.

The following days were still colder; the sky was covered with a penetrating fog, and it became difficult to see whether the whirlwinds, which scattered snow about, had their origin in the ice fields or the sky. The confusion cannot be described.

The crew were occupied with various employments on board, the principal of which was to prepare the fat and the oil produced by the seals; they became blocks of ice which required to be cut up with the axe; this ice was chipped up into bits as hard as marble, and thus about a dozen barrels full were obtained. Every sort of vase was quite useless, they would have broken when the liquid they contained became changed by the temperature.

On the 28th the thermometer fell thirty-two degrees below zero. They had only ten days' coal left, and every one looked forward with dread for the time when this combustible would fail them.

Hatteras, as a measure of economy, extinguished the fire in the poop, and then Shandon, the doctor, and he shared the common room with the men. Hatteras was thus brought more into contact with the crew, who cast stupidly ferocious looks at him. He heard their reproaches and their threats without being able to punish them. He seemed to be deaf to every observation. He never exacted a place near the fire. He remained in a corner, with his arms folded without saying a word.

In spite of the doctor's advice, Pen and his friends refused to take the least exercise. They passed whole days with their elbows on their knees round the stove, or wrapped up in their blankets; they were therefore not long in losing their health; they could not struggle against the fatal influence of the climate, and the dreaded scurvy made its appearance on board.

For some time the doctor had begun distributing lime juice and chalk lozenges every morning; but these preservatives, generally so efficacious, had but an imperceptible effect on the sick, and the disease, running its course, soon showed its most horrible symptoms.

Clifton was the first who was attacked with this terrible disease; Gripper, Brunton, and Strong, were soon unable to leave their hammocks. Those who were yet spared were unable to avoid the spectacle of these sufferings, for there was no other asylum than the common room—there they must remain; it was therefore promptly converted into an hospital, for out of the eighteen hands on board the *Forward*, thirteen were in a few days struck down by scurvy. Pen seemed to be likely to escape the contagion, his

vigorous constitution hitherto preserved him from it ; Shandon had already experienced some of the symptoms, but they went no farther, and exercise contributed to keep him in a tolerable state of health.

The doctor attended to the sick with the greatest devotion, and his heart ached when he found himself face to face with sufferings which he could not relieve. However, he did his best to console and amuse these poor wretches ; he read aloud to them ; his astonishing memory furnished him with interesting stories ; while the men who were still in health pressed in a circle round the stove, but the groans, the complaints, and the cries of the sick interrupted him from time to time, and then, leaving off in the middle of a story, he became the attentive doctor again. He kept his own health well ; he did not lose flesh ; his obesity, he said, was better than the warmest clothing to him ; he used to say he found it very useful to be clothed like a seal or a whale, which, thanks to thick layers of blubber, can easily resist the attacks of an Arctic atmosphere.

Hatteras seemed to feel nothing, either physically or morally. The crew's sufferings did not seem to affect him. Perhaps he allowed no emotion to be visible on his countenance ; yet an attentive observer might have surprised the heart of a man beating under that iron exterior. The doctor analysed and studied, but could not succeed in classing that supernatural temperament.

The thermometer fell still lower ; the promenade on the poop was deserted, the Esquimaux dogs alone wandered about on it, howling most lamentably. There was always one man on duty at the stove, whose business it was to see the fire did not go out. The moment the fire got low, the cold invaded the room, the walls were incrustated with ice, and the condensed moisture fell in snow on the brig's unfortunate inhabitants.

In the midst of these tortures they reached the 8th of December ; that morning the doctor had gone as usual to consult the thermometer outside. He found the mercury frozen in the bowl.

"Forty-four degrees below zero !" said he to himself, in a fright. That day they burned the last piece of coal they had on board.





CHAPTER XXVII.

THE GREAT COLD AT CHRISTMAS.

FOR a moment he despaired. The thought of death, and a death from cold, appeared in all its horror. This last morsel of coal burned with an ominous glow; the fire seemed about to go out and the temperature of the room fell sensibly. But Johnson went and brought some bits of that new fuel which the marine animals had supplied, and thrust it into the stove; he also added some tow impregnated with frozen oil, and soon obtained sufficient warmth. The smell of this burning grease was insupportable; but how could it be avoided? They were obliged to put up with it. Johnson himself agreed his expedient might be improved, and would hardly be tolerated in a Liverpool house.

"And yet," said he, "this disgusting smell may be of some use to us."

"How?" asked the carpenter.

"By attracting the bears in this direction, for they are very fond of these smells."

"Good! but what do we want with the bears?"

"Friend Bell," replied Johnson, "we can no longer reckon on the seals; they have disappeared, and for some time. If the bears do not come and supply us with fuel in their turn, I don't know what will become of us?"

"True, Johnson, our fate is by no means certain; this is a frightful situation, and if this sort of fuel should ever fail us, I can hardly see any means——"

"There is but one!"

"Is there one?" replied Bell.

"Yes, Bell, and a desperate one. But the captain would never—and yet he must come to it at last!"

Old Johnson shook his head and fell into a reverie, from which Bell did not attempt to draw him. He knew these bits of frozen blubber, obtained with so much trouble, would not last a week, notwithstanding the strictest economy.

The boatswain was not wrong. Several bears, attracted by the horrid smell, were signalled to leeward of the *Forward*; the most robust of the crew went in pursuit of them; but these animals are remarkably quick and cunning, and it was impossible to get near them, and they were unable to hit one.

The brig's crew was seriously threatened with death from cold; it was impossible to resist such a temperature for forty-eight hours. Every man saw the end of the last morsel of fuel with terror.

Now, that happened the 20th of December, at three in the afternoon; the fire went out; the seamen, crouched round the stove, looked at one another with haggard eyes. Hatteras remained motionless in one corner, while the doctor walked impatiently up and down the room. He was at his wits' end.

The temperature in the common room suddenly fell to seven degrees below zero.

But if the doctor's imagination failed him, if he no longer knew what to do, the others knew for him. So Shandon, cold and resolute, Pen with anger in his eyes, and two or three of their comrades who could still crawl about, went up to Hatteras.

"Captain," said Shandon.

Hatteras, absorbed in thought, did not hear him.

"Captain," said Shandon, touching his hand.

Hatteras started up.

"Sir," said he.

"Captain, we have no fire!"

"Well," said Hatteras.

"We should be glad to know if it is your intention that we should die of cold!" replied Shandon, with fearful irony.

"My intention," replied Hatteras, gravely, "is that every man should do his duty to the end!"

"There is something above duty, captain," replied the second officer; "it's the law of self-preservation. I repeat, we have no fire, and if that continues, in two days there will not be a man of us left alive!"

"I have no wood to give you," replied Hatteras, gloomily.

"Well, then," cried Pen, with violence, "when there is no more wood, we must go and cut it where it grows."

Hatteras grew pale with anger.

"Where is that!" said he.

"On board!" insolently replied the sailor.

"On board!" cried the captain, clenching his fists.

"Of course!" replied Pen; "when the ship is of no use to the men, why not burn the ship?"

At the beginning of Pen's speech Hatteras had seized a hatchet. At the end of it the hatchet was put above Pen's head.

"Scoundrel!" cried he.

The doctor threw himself before Pen whom he thrust back, the axe falling on the ground made a deep cut in the flooring. Johnson, Bell, and Simpson, grouped round Hatteras, seemed determined to support him. Meanwhile the most lamentable and plaintive tones issued from those sleeping bunks transformed into death-beds.

"Fire! fire!" cried these unfortunate patients, invaded by cold under their blankets.

Hatteras made an effort, and after a few moments, said—

"If we destroy our vessel how are we to return to England?"

"Sir," said Johnson, "we might be able to burn some of the less important part, the rail, for instance."

"The boats are always there, and what is there to prevent us from building a smaller vessel out of the wreck of the old one?"

"Never!" replied Hatteras.

"But!" cried several sailors, raising their voices.

"We have a large quantity of spirits of wine; burn that to the last drop."

"Here goes for the spirits of wine!" cried Johnson, affecting a confidence he was far from feeling, and, with the help of large wicks steeped in spirits he was able to raise the common room's temperature somewhat.

For a few days after this scene of despair the wind returned to the south, the thermometer rose; the snow fell in whirlwinds, while the temperature was less severe.

A few of the men were able to leave the ship during the driest hours of the day, but ophthalmia and scurvy kept the greater number of them on board; besides, they could neither hunt nor fish.

After all, this was but a respite from the frightful cold, and the 25th, after an unexpected change of wind, the frozen mercury disappeared again in the bowl. They were therefore obliged to have recourse to the spirits of wine thermometer, which the greatest cold is unable to freeze.

The doctor, to his horror, found it at sixty-six degrees below zero. It has hardly ever been given to man to support such a temperature.

The ice lay like long mirrors on the floor, the room was filled with a thick fog, the damp fell like snow; they could hardly see one another, the heat of the body deserted the extremities, their hands and feet were blue, their heads seemed bound with a circlet of iron,

and their minds were in a state bordering on delirium. One fearful symptom was that their tongues could no longer articulate a word.

From the day they had proposed to burn his ship, Hatteras wandered about the deck for hours together; he watched her, and stood sentry over her. That wood was as dear as his own flesh; it was cutting off a limb of himself when they cut a splinter from her. He was armed, and kept good watch, insensible to cold, to snow, to the ice, which stiffened his clothes, and enveloped him as in a granite cuirass. Duke seemed to understand him, and accompanied his master's steps with his own howls.

On the 25th of December, however, he went down into the common room. The doctor, taking advantage of some remains of energy, went straight up to him.

"Hatteras," said he, "we are dying from want of fire——"

"Never!" interrupted Hatteras, well knowing what was coming.

"You must," gently replied the doctor.

"No, never!" returned Hatteras, more forcibly than ever; "I will never consent to it, they may disobey me if they will."

This was as good as liberty to act. Johnson and Bell rushed up deck. Hatteras could hear the woodwork of his brig crack under the axe. He burst into tears.

That day was Christmas-day, the family *fête* day in England. What bitter recollections of joyous children round their Christmas-tree; and the roast beef, and the mince-pies; while here, grief, despair, and misery, in its last stage, and the yule log is a block of wood from a ship lost in the deepest part of the frozen zone!

Under the influence of the fire, strength and feeling returned to the hearts of the sailors. Boiling hot tea and coffee produced an instantaneous relief, and so tenacious is the human mind of hope, that they began to hope again. It was thus that the fatal year of 1860 was ended, the early winter of which had so deranged the bold plans of Hatteras.

Now it happened that, January 1st, 1861, precisely, was marked by an unexpected discovery. It was rather less cold; the doctor had resumed his usual studies, he was reading Sir Edward Belcher's account of his expedition to the Polar Seas. All at once a passage which he had not noticed before struck him with astonishment. He read it over again. There could be no mistake about it.

Sir Edward Belcher was relating that, after having arrived at the extreme end of the Queen's Channel, he had discovered unmistakeable traces of men having passed there.

"There are," said he, "the remains of dwellings very superior to what could be attributed to the coarser habits of wandering tribes of Esquimaux. The walls are built on good solid founda-

tions. The floor of the interior has been covered with a thick layer of gravel, and has been paved. Bones of reindeer, sea-horses, and seals, lay about in great quantity. We found coal there."

At these last words an idea came into the doctor's head. He took his book with him, and went and communicated his idea to Hatteras.

"Coal!" cried the latter.

"Yes, Hatteras, coal; that is safety for us all."

"Coal on this desert coast? No, it is not possible."

"Why doubt it, Hatteras? Belcher would not have stated this as a fact if it was not so, if he had not seen it with his own eyes. Besides, we are not a hundred miles from the coast where Belcher saw this coal! What is an excursion of a hundred miles? Nothing. Longer excursions have been made across the ice in a cold equal to this. Let us go, captain."

"Let us go," repeated Hatteras, whose active imagination made him already perceive a chance of rescue.

Johnson was also told of this determination; he heartily approved of the plan, and communicated it to his comrades. Some praised it, others received it with indifference.

"Coal on these coasts!" said Wall, from his bed of sickness.

"Let them go," said Shandon, mysteriously.

But before the preparations for the journey were begun, Hatteras wished to ascertain exactly the *Forward's* position. The importance of this calculation may easily be understood, and why her situation ought to be ascertained mathematically. Once at some distance from the vessel, they could not find her again without being exactly correct in his calculations.

Hatteras went on deck and took several lunar distances and meridian heights of the principal stars, at different moments.

These observations offered considerable difficulty, for, at this low temperature, the glass and reflectors of the instruments were covered with a layer of ice from his breath, and more than once his eyebrows were burnt by coming in contact with the brass rims of the glasses.

He was, however, able to obtain very exact traces for his calculations, and he returned to the common room to reduce them to figures. When he had finished his work he raised his head in stupid astonishment, took his chart, marked it, and passed it to the doctor.

"Well?" asked the latter.

"In what latitude were we at the beginning of our wintering."

"Why, in seventy-eight degrees fifteen minutes latitude, and ninety-five degrees thirty-five minutes longitude, precisely at the frozen pole."

"Well then," whispered Hatteras, "our ice field is drifting; we are two degrees more to the north, and more towards the west, and three hundred miles at least from your coal depot."

"And these poor fellows know nothing about it," said the doctor.

"Not a word," said Hatteras, significantly putting his finger to his lips.





CHAPTER XXVIII.

PREPARATIONS FOR DEPARTURE.

HATTERAS would not inform his crew of this change in their situation, and he was right ; for the poor wretches, had they known they were drifting northward, would have given way to the madness of despair; and the doctor approved of the captain's silence.

The latter had kept to himself the impression this discovery had made on him. It was his first moment of happiness for months past. He found himself at a hundred and fifty miles more to the north, hardly eight degrees from the pole. But he concealed his satisfaction so well that the doctor never suspected it, though he often asked himself the reason of the captain's altered looks; but that was all, and the natural reply to such a question never occurred to him.

As the *Forward* drew nearer the pole, the further she was from the depot of coal noticed by Sir Edward Belcher. Instead of a hundred miles, they would have to go two hundred and fifty miles to the south. However, after a short discussion between Clawbonny and Hatteras the expedition was decided upon.

As Belcher's veracity was not to be doubted, things ought to be found as he had left them.

Since 1853 no new expedition had been sent to these extreme continents. Few, or no Esquimaux were to be met with in these latitudes. The disappointment at Beechey Island was not like to be repeated on the coast of New Cornwall. The lowness of the temperature would preserve objects subjected to its influence for an indefinite period of time. There was every chance in favour of this expedition across the ice. This was calculated to occupy forty days at most, and Johnson made his preparations accordingly.

His first care was the sledge; it was about five-and-thirty inches wide, and twenty-four feet long. The Esquimaux build them often fifty feet long. This one was composed of long planks turned up before and behind, and bent like a bow by two strong cords. This gave a certain elasticity which rendered a shock less dangerous; it ran easily on the ice: but when there was snow, which was not yet hard, it was raised on two upright supports, rubbed as the Esquimaux did, with sulphur, mixed with snow, which did not increase its strength. The team consisted of six dogs, strong, though lean; they did not seem to have suffered much from the severity of the winter. Their deerskin harness was in good condition, and they could rely on the goodness of the whole conveyance. These six animals could draw a weight of two thousand pounds without excessive fatigue.

Their encampment materials were a tent, in case it should not be practicable to construct a snow-house, a large mackintosh sheet, to lay on the snow, and several blankets and buffalo skins. They also took the hallett boat with them.

Their provisions consisted of five cases of pemmican, weighing four hundred and fifty pounds, at the allowance of one pound of pemmican daily for man and dog; the latter were seven in number, including Duke; the men were four.

They also took twelve gallons of spirits of wine, and tea and biscuit in sufficient quantity; a small portable kitchen, plenty of tow and matches, ammunition, and four double-barrelled guns. The men wore waistbands of caoutchouc, an invention of Captain Parry, in which the heat of the body, and the motion of walking, would keep the tea, coffee, and water in a fluid state.

Johnson also made some snow shoes, they acted as skates; on the very hard frozen ground deer-skin mocassins were worn instead; each traveller was supplied with two pairs of each.

These important preparations, for any detail omitted might cause the loss of the expedition, required fully four days.

Every day at twelve Hatteras took an observation; the vessel had ceased drifting, and it was necessary to ascertain that fact for certain to be able to find her again. He then had to choose the men who were to go with him, which was a serious matter; some were not in a fit state, but he had to think twice about leaving them on board. But as their common safety depended on the success of the expedition, it seemed most opportune to choose sure and devoted companions.

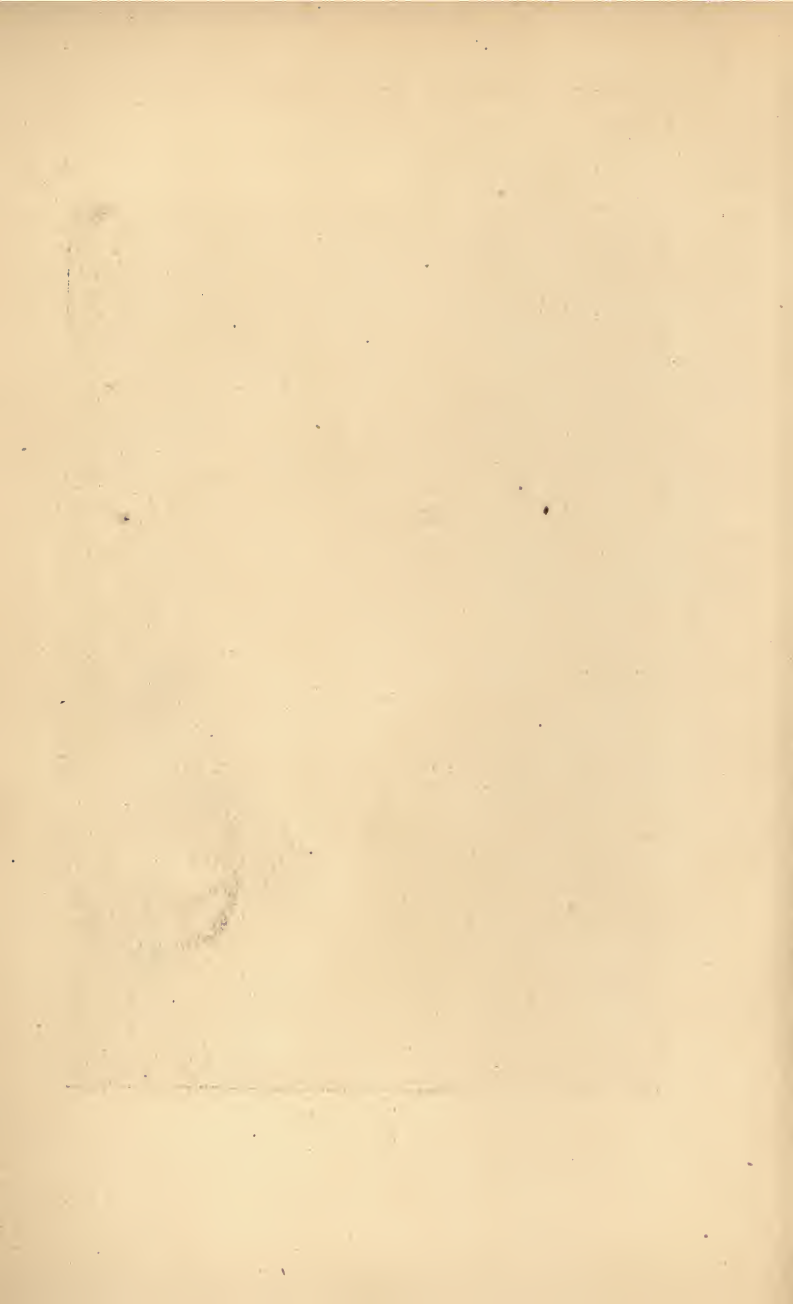
Shandon, of course, was left behind; indeed he showed no regret in that respect. Wall was too ill to take part in it.

The sick grew no worse. Their treatment consisted in friction, and in strong doses of lime juice, which was easy to follow, and did not require the doctor's presence. He therefore put himself at the head of those who were to go, nor did any one grumble at his decision.



Starting with the dog sledge.

Captain Hatteras.



Johnson greatly wished to accompany the captain in his perilous enterprise, but the latter took him aside, and spoke to him earnestly and feelingly.

"Johnson, I can trust to you, and to you only. You are the only one in whose hands I can leave my ship. I must know you are there to look after Shandon and the rest. They are confined here by the winter, but who knows what fatal resolutions their wickedness may lead them to. You shall be furnished with formal instructions which in case of need will put the command into your hand. Our absence will not last more than four or five weeks, and I shall be easy in my mind having you here. You must have wood, Johnson, I know it, but spare my poor ship as much as you can. Do you understand me, Johnson?"

"I understand you, captain," said the old seaman, "and I will stay here since you care so much about it."

"Thanks," said Hatteras, squeezing his boatswain's hand; then he added—

"If you don't see me come back, Johnson, wait until the ice breaks up, and try to push a reconnaissance towards the pole. If the others oppose your doing so, think no more of us, but take the *Forward* back to England."

"Is that your desire, captain?"

"My formal orders," replied Hatteras.

"They shall be carried out," said Johnson, without further observation.

The doctor, after this decision was come to, regretted his worthy friend, but he felt Hatteras was acting wisely. Their two travelling companions were Bell the carpenter, and Simpson the harpooner. The first was a brave and trustworthy fellow, in good health, and likely to make himself very useful; the other, though a less resolute character, was willing to join the expedition, to which he might be very useful, both in fishing and hunting. The detachment was, therefore composed of Hatteras, Clawbonny, Bell, Simpson, and the faithful Duke, four men and seven dogs to feed.

The first days in January the temperature, mean rate, was thirty-three degrees below zero. Hatteras waited impatiently for a change in the weather; he often consulted the barometer, but he could not trust it; in high latitudes the instrument seemed to lose its accuracy. Nature there makes notable exceptions to her laws in general; thus a clear sky was not always accompanied by cold, nor did the snow send the mercury up; the barometer remained uncertain, as has been noticed by many navigators in the polar seas; it went down with a north or easterly wind; when low it brought fine weather, when high, snow or rain. It was, therefore, not to be relied upon.

At last, on the 5th of January, came a breeze from the east; the thermometer rose to eighteen degrees below zero. Hatteras determined to start the next morning; he could stand it no longer, seeing

his ship cut to pieces before his eyes; the whole of the poop had been burnt already.

On the 6th of January, in the midst of a snow-storm, the word was given to start. Bell and Simpson silently shook hands with their companions. Hatteras intended to have said a few words of farewell, but he only saw looks expressive of ill-will. He thought he surprised an ironical smile on Shandon's face, so he said nothing. Perhaps, as he looked once more at the *Forward*, he hesitated for one moment to leave her.

But it was too late to alter his mind; the sledge was loaded, and in waiting on the ice field. Bell walked on ahead; the others followed. Johnson accompanied the travellers for a quarter of a mile; then Hatteras begged him to return on board, which the old seaman did, after a long farewell wave of the hand.

Hatteras just then turned to take a last look at his brig, and saw the tops of her masts disappear in the dull snow clouds of the sky.





CHAPTER XXIX.

ACROSS THE ICE FIELDS.

THE little party took a south-easterly direction. Simpson took charge of the sledge. Duke assisted him zealously, and did not seem at all astonished at his companions' occupation. Hatteras and the doctor came last, while Bell walked on ahead, sounding the ice with his iron-shod pole.

The rise in the thermometer indicated snow, which was not long in coming, for it soon fell in thick flakes. These blinding whirlwinds added to the difficulties of the journey; they sometimes got out of the right direction, and they could not go on fast; still they could reckon on doing three miles an hour on the average.

The field ice was uneven and rough, the sledge was very much jolted, and when they came to a stone it was often in danger of turning over; but they got on pretty well. Hatteras and his companions were carefully wrapped up in their fur clothes, cut in the Greenland fashion, and more appropriate to the climate than remarkable for fashion, their faces were almost hidden in hoods impenetrable by wind or snow; the eyes, nose, and mouth alone were exposed to contact with the air. And they were better thus unprotected; for high cravats and comforters soon become stiffened by the frozen breath, and it almost becomes necessary to use an axe to take them off, which even in the Arctic seas is an awkward manner of undressing. It was far better to leave free passage for the breath. The endless plain was fatiguingly monotonous; everywhere the same shaped hummocks, whose very irregularity became regular; ice blocks all cast in the same mould, and icebergs through which valleys tortuously wound. As they marched along, compass in hand, the travellers spoke but little. In this cold atmosphere it was positive pain to open one's mouth; pointed crystals of ice immediately formed between the lips, and the warmth of the breath was not

sufficient to dissolve them. Bell's footsteps were imprinted in the soft snow, the others followed them attentively, and where he had passed the rest of the party could follow him in safety.

Numerous tracks of bears and foxes crossed their path; but the first day it was impossible to see one of them; and it would have been both dangerous and useless to hunt them; for they could not add any weight to the already heavily-loaded sledge. Generally in excursions of this sort the travellers take care to leave depôts of provisions on their route, they place them in spots called "caches," hidden in the snow from the attacks of animals, thus lightening their load, and on their return they pick them up again. But Hatteras could not have recourse to this expedient on an ice field which might by chance be in motion; on land these depôts would have been practicable, but not across ice fields, and the uncertainty of the route rendered their return by the same road extremely problematical. At mid-day Hatteras halted his party under the shelter of a wall of ice; their breakfast consisted of pemmican and boiling hot tea, the refreshing qualities of which cheered up the travellers greatly. They set off again after resting an hour. They had gone a distance of twenty miles this first day's march, and in the evening men and dogs were alike exhausted. Nevertheless, notwithstanding their fatigue, they built a snow house in which to pass the night: the tent would not have sheltered them sufficiently. At this work Bell showed himself a proficient. Blocks of ice were laid one on the other in the shape of a dome, the key stone being at the top. Snow served for mortar and filled up the interstices, and as it soon hardened it converted the whole erection into one block.

A narrow opening through which they had to crawl allowed access into this grotto; the doctor had some trouble in thrusting his body through the aperture, and the others followed him. They quickly cooked their supper over the flame of a spirit lamp. The temperature inside the snow hut was quite endurable; the wind which was raging outside could not penetrate it. They all eat their supper together, and when it was finished they prepared to sleep. The mackintosh sheets laid out on the snow floor kept them perfectly dry. They dried their shoes and stockings at the flame of the portable kitchen; three of the travellers wrapped themselves up and went to sleep, while the fourth kept watch over the safety of them all and took care to keep the aperture open, otherwise they ran the risk of being buried alive.

Duke shared the hut with them; the other dogs remained outside, and, after having been fed, they buried themselves in the snow, which soon formed a thick covering over them.

The day's fatigues soon sent them to sleep. The doctor took his watch at three in the morning. A hurricane swept over them in the night. These wanderers' situation was a strange one, lost in the snow and buried in a tomb, the walls of which grew thicker at every squall of wind

The next morning at six they recommenced their monotonous march; always the same valleys, the same icebergs, the same uniformity. However, the temperature having fallen several degrees, rendered their journey easier by freezing the layers of snow. They often fell in with hillocks resembling the cairns or "caches" of the Esquimaux; and the doctor had one broken into for curiosity's sake, but he only found a block of ice in it.

"What did you hope to find, Clawbonny?" said Hatteras; "are we not the first men who ever trod this part of the globe?"

"Probably we are," replied the doctor, "but still, who knows?"

"We have no time to lose in useless search," resumed the captain; "I am in a hurry to get back to my ship, even if we should miss the fuel of which we stand so much in need."

"So far as that goes," said the doctor, "I am in very great hopes."

"Doctor," Hatteras used often to say, "I was wrong to leave the *Forward*. It was a mistake. The captain's place is always on board his ship, and nowhere else."

"Johnson is there."

"No doubt, but—let us get on." The sledge got along very well; they could hear Simpson calling to and encouraging his dogs. In consequence of a phosphorescent phenomenon the ground they ran over seemed on fire, and the blades of the sledge raised a dust of sparks. The doctor, having gone on ahead to examine the nature of this snow, in jumping a hummock, he suddenly disappeared. Bell who was nearest to him immediately ran up.

"Well, Dr. Clawbonny," cried he, while Hatteras and Simpson joined them directly, "where are you?"

"Doctor!" called out the captain.

"This way, in this hole. Reach me the end of a rope, or I shall come out at the other side of the globe!"

They let the rope down to the doctor, who was twelve feet below, at the bottom of a funnel. He made it fast round his waist, and his three companions with some trouble hauled him up.

"Are you hurt?" said Hatteras.

"No, nothing ever hurts me," replied the doctor, brushing the snow off his jolly face.

"But how did it happen?"

"It is the fault of the refraction," replied he, laughing. "I thought I was going to step over a crack a foot wide, and I fell into a hole ten feet deep. It seems optical illusions are the only ones left us, my friends, but I should be sorry to lose them. Let that be a warning to you not to take a step without trying the ground first, for our senses are not to be trusted. Here our ears deceive us, and our eyes cannot see straight. This is certainly a most delightful country."

"Can you go on with us?" asked Hatteras.

“Go on? yes! Hatteras, this fall has done me more good than harm.”

The route to the south-east was once more taken, and when evening came the travellers halted, having marched a distance of twenty-five miles. They were tired, but that did not prevent the doctor from climbing to the top of an iceberg while they were building a snow hut.

The moon, which was almost at the full, shone with extraordinary brilliancy in the clear sky, the stars' rays were surprisingly intense. From the summit of the iceberg the view extended over an immense plain studded with most strangely-shaped hillocks; it seemed like a vast treeless cemetery, sad and silent, in which twenty generations of the whole world were laid to rest in eternal sleep.

Notwithstanding cold and fatigue, the doctor remained some time lost in contemplation, from which his companions had some trouble to rouse him, but they must think of rest; the snow hut was ready, the four travellers crept into it, wrapped themselves up like dormice, and were soon fast asleep.

The next day and those following passed without incident; the journey was easy or difficult, fast or slow, according to the weather; sometimes they wore their moccasins, at others their snow shoes, according to the nature of the ground.

They thus reached the 13th of January. The moon, which was in her last quarter, was only visible for a short time; while the sun, though always below the horizon, gave six hours' twilight, insufficient to throw a light on their road; it was therefore necessary to stake it out by the compass. Bell was at the head, Hatteras walked in a straight line after him, then Simpson, and then the doctor, one relieving the other, so that they could only see Hatteras, and thus they endeavoured to keep in a straight line. But notwithstanding they sometimes deviated thirty or forty degrees from their proper course, and then they had to begin staking it out again.

On Sunday, the 14th of January, Hatteras considered they had gone about a hundred miles to the southward; this morning was devoted to divers repairs, nor was Divine service forgotten. At mid-day they began their march again; the temperature was very cold; the thermometer indicated thirty-two degrees below zero, with a very clear atmosphere.

All at once, with nothing which could have warned them of such a sudden change, there rose from the ground vapour in a perfectly frozen state; it reached about ninety feet from the level, and remained motionless. They could hardly see one another a yard apart; this vapour clung to their clothes in long pointed prisms. The travellers, surprised at such a frost rime, had at first but one idea, that of keeping close to one another.

Simpson began to hail—

“Bell, Dr. Clawbonny, doctor, where's the captain?”

And so the four companions sought one another, with their arms

out, in this intense fog ; but what rendered them most uneasy was that they could hear no answer to their repeated hails ; the vapour seemed incapable of transmitting sound.

They all had the same idea of discharging their guns as a rallying signal, but if the human voice was too weak, the report of the guns was too loud, for the echoes repeated it in every direction, and produced a confused rolling sound without any particular direction.

Hatteras stood still, folded his arms, and waited. Simpson had some trouble in keeping his team quiet. Bell returned the way he had come by following his own footsteps, which he felt about for with his hands. The doctor, after tumbling about for some time, said to himself, "This can't last ; what a strange climate ! taking one rather too unawares, though. One never knows what to expect, not to mention these pointed icicles which are pricking my face. Hallo ! captain !" he called out once more.

But he got no answer ; quite by chance he reloaded his gun, and though he had his thick gloves on the barrels blistered his fingers. While he was doing it he fancied he saw a confused mass moving a few paces from him.

"At last !" he cried. "Hatteras, Bell, Simpson, is that you ? Answer !"

A low growl was audible.

"Ha !" thought the doctor, "what's that ?"

The mass came nearer, and as its outline became more distinct, its first dimensions diminished. A horrid idea occurred to him.

"It's a bear !" said he to himself.

And so it was, a bear of the largest size, lost in the fog ; he had been wandering about at the risk of running against the traveller, whose presence he certainly never suspected.

"The situation is becoming complicated," thought the doctor, remaining quite still.

At one time he could almost feel its breath, then he could see its enormous paws beating the air, at times they passed so close to him that his clothes were torn by its claws, and then the moving mass disappeared like a spectre.

The doctor sprang back, and in doing so he felt the ground rise under his feet. By the help of his hands, and clinging to the rough sides of the ice, he first clambered over one block and then another, and with the help of his pole, with which he felt his way, he succeeded in getting to a height of about eighty feet ; his head came clear out of the frozen fog, and he could see all round him.

"Good," said he, just as he saw his three companions emerging from the dense fluid.

"Hatteras !"

"Dr. Clawbonny !"

"Bell !"

"Simpson !"

These four names were all shouted at once ; the twilight lighted by a magnificent halo cast rays which tinted the frost rime like clouds, and the summits of the icebergs seemed to issue from a mass of molten silver.

The travellers found themselves confined to a circle of less than a hundred feet in diameter. Thanks to the purity of the upper air in a very cold temperature, they could hear themselves speak with ease, and they were able to converse from the top of their different peaks. After they had fired once or twice without any reply, they each of them thought they had nothing left for it but to try and rise above the fog.

"The sledge," cried the captain.

"Eighty feet below us," replied Simpson.

"Is it all right?"

"All right."

"And the bear?" asked the doctor.

"What bear?" said Bell.

"The bear I met, which nearly smashed my skull."

"A bear," said Hatteras ; "we had better go down again."

"No," replied the doctor, "we may lose ourselves again, and then we shall have all our work to do over again."

"And suppose that brute falls in with our dogs?" said Hatteras.

At that moment they could hear a dog barking ; it came from the fog, and easily reached the travellers' ears.

"That's Duke," said Hatteras ; "there is certainly something wrong, I shall go down."

Howls and yells seemed to come from below, making a most horrible concert. Duke and the other dogs kept barking furiously. This noise sounded like a great heaving noise in a padded room. They could feel some invisible fight was going on below, and the vapour was at times agitated as the sea is during a battle between two marine monsters.

"Duke! Duke!" called the captain, preparing to dive down again into the frost rime.

"Wait, Hatteras wait a moment," exclaimed the doctor ; "I think the mist is beginning to lift."

It did not clear away, but it sank down like a pond which gets lower and lower ; it seemed to re-enter the ground from which it sprang ; the glittering tops of the icebergs were increasing in size above it ; others, hitherto submerged, rose like islands from the sea ; by an optical delusion easily understood, the travellers, hanging on to their icy cones, fancied themselves rising above the atmosphere, while in reality the upper level of the fog was sinking below them.

At first they could just see the top of the sledge, then the team of dogs, then other animals, about thirty in number, then great bodies in motion, and then Duke jumping up, his head appearing into the frozen layer of vapour, and then disappearing again.

"Foxes," cried Bell.

"Bears," replied the doctor, "one, two, five!"

"Our dogs! our provisions," called out Simpson."

A band of foxes and bears had fallen in with the sledge, and were making a great breach in the provisions. The dogs were barking furiously, but the pack paid no attention to them, and the scene of destruction went on.

"Fire!" cried the captain, discharging his gun.

His companions imitated him. But at this four-fold report the bears, raising their heads, and with a comical growl, gave the signal for departure; they trotted off at a pace a horse could not have equalled, and, followed by the pack of foxes, soon disappeared among the ice hills of the north.





CHAPTER XXX.

THE CAIRN.

THE duration of this polar phenomenon had not been more than three-quarters of an hour; but the foxes and bears had time enough to make up for the privations they had endured lately.

The coverings of the sledge had been torn by their claws, boxes of pemmican burst open, biscuit bags plundered, the store of tea scattered about the snow, a small barrel of spirits of wine emptied of its contents, and encampment materials thrown about; everything bore witness to the rapacity and voracity of these four-footed plunderers.

"Here's a misfortune," said Bell, contemplating this scene of desolation.

"And how are we to make up for it?" was Simpson's very natural question.

"Let us first form an estimate of the damage done," said the doctor.

Hatteras had not uttered a word, but he was already collecting the boxes and bags which were lying about. They first picked up the pemmican and biscuit, which was still eatable. The loss of part of the spirits of wine was very unfortunate; without it no warm drinks, no hot tea and coffee. The doctor estimated their loss at two hundred pounds of pemmican, and a hundred and fifty pounds of biscuit; if they continued their journey they would have to be put on half-rations.

They then discussed what was best to be done. Should they return to the ship and begin the expedition afresh? But could they make up their minds to give up the hundred and fifty miles they had already performed? It would have a very bad effect on the minds of the crew, if they returned without the fuel they so much needed? Would they find any of them ready to take another such a journey

across the ice? Evidently their best course would be to get forward, even at the cost of certain privation.

The doctor, Hatteras, and Bell were for this last step, Simpson was for returning. The fatigue of the journey had affected his health, and he was visibly growing weaker, but when he saw he was alone in his opinion, he took his place again at the head of the team, and the little caravan continued its journey south.

During the three following days, from the 15th to the 17th of January, the journey was of the same monotonous character. They got on more slowly, for they were feeling the effects of hard work; their legs began to fail them, and the dogs could hardly draw their load. Insufficient food was telling both on men and on animals. The weather changed, with its usual fickleness, from intense cold to damp penetrating fogs.

On the 18th of January the ice-fields suddenly put on an altered appearance. A number of peaks, like pyramids, rose high in the horizon. The soil, in some places, was visible through the snow; it seemed to consist of gneiss, schist, and quartz, with some appearance of calcareous rock. At last the travellers set their feet on the main land, which, according to their calculations, ought to be New Cornwall.

The doctor could not help setting foot on firm soil with a feeling of satisfaction. They had not more than a hundred miles to go to reach Cape Belcher; but their troubles were destined to be greatly increased across this broken ground. Strewed with pointed rocks, crevices, and precipices, they were forced to bury themselves in the interior, or climb the high cliffs of the coast, across narrow gorges in which the snow lay thirty or forty feet deep.

They soon began to miss the almost level route across the ice fields, so favourable to sledge travelling; now they all had to lend their help to move it along. The exhausted dogs were no longer strong enough, and the men, who were obliged to harness themselves to it, were worn out by their efforts to assist them. Often were they compelled to unload the sledge completely to get it over hillocks which were excessively steep, and on whose frozen surface they could hardly keep their feet.

A pass, ten feet wide, often occupied them several hours. Thus, the first day, they only gained five miles on the Cornish soil, well named, indeed, for it offered the same appearances at that southwestern extremity of England.

The next day the sledge reached the higher part of the cliffs. The travellers were so exhausted they could not build themselves a snow hut, but passed the night under the tent, wrapped up in their buffalo skins, and drying their stockings by the heat of their bodies. The inevitable consequences may easily be conjectured; the thermometer this night was down at forty-four degrees, and the mercury was frozen.

The state of Simpson's health rendered them very uneasy. An

obstinate cold, violent attacks of rheumatism, intolerable pain, obliged him to lie on the sledge, which he was no longer able to lead. Bell took his place; he was also a sufferer, but not to such a degree as to be forced to give in.

The doctor also felt the influence of this terrible winter, but he never allowed a complaint to escape him; he marched on ahead supporting himself on his pole, and helping everywhere.

Hatteras, unmoved and insensible, vigorous as the day they started, followed in silence.

On the 20th of January the temperature was so low that the least effort was immediately followed by complete prostration. The difficulties of the route became so great that the doctor and Hatteras had to harness themselves to the sledge; the front of it was occasionally broken by some unexpected jolt, and they had to stop to repair it. This happened several times a day.

The travellers were following the course of a deep ravine up to their waist in snow, and yet in a violent state of perspiration. None of them spoke. All at once, Bell, who was near the doctor, looked at him anxiously, then, without saying a word, picked up a handful of snow, and began rubbing his companion's face.

"What's the matter, Bell?"

But Bell continued rubbing.

"Are you mad, Bell?" cried the doctor, with his eyes, nose, and mouth full of snow. "What is the matter?"

"If your nose is still on your face," said Bell, "you owe it to me."

"My nose!" replied the doctor, putting his hand to his face.

"Yes, Dr. Clawbonny, you were completely frost-bitten, your nose was quite white when I looked at you, and if I had not treated you so energetically you would have lost that ornament, which, though inconvenient on such a journey, is necessary all the same."

In fact, a little more and the doctor's nose would have been frozen; the circulation was happily re-established in time, and, thanks to Bell's treatment, all danger disappeared.

"Thanks, Bell," said the doctor, "I will do as much for you when the time comes."

"I hope you will, Dr. Clawbonny," replied the carpenter; "would to heaven we had no greater misfortunes to dread."

"Alas, Bell, you refer to Simpson; that poor fellow suffers terribly."

"Are you uneasy about him?" asked Hatteras, anxiously.

"Yes, captain," returned the doctor. "He has a violent attack of scurvy, his legs are swelled already, and there the poor fellow lies under the tarpaulin of the sledge, half frozen, and every jolt adds to his sufferings."

"Poor Simpson!" muttered Bell.

"Suppose we halted for a day or two?" suggested the doctor.

"Halt!" cried Hatteras; "when eighteen men's lives depend on our return!"

"But,—" the doctor began.

"Clawbonny, Bell, listen to me," said Hatteras: "we have not provisions for twenty days! now tell me if we have a moment to lose?"

Neither the doctor nor Bell returned an answer, and the sledge resumed its journey. In the evening they halted at the foot of an icy hillock in which Bell soon cut a large hole; the travellers took refuge in it, and the doctor passed the night attending to Simpson; the ravages of scurvy were very apparent; and his sufferings brought continual complaints to his swollen lips.

"Ah! Dr. Clawbonny!"

"Keep up your courage, my man," said the doctor.

"I shall never get over it, I feel it. I wish I was dead."

The doctor replied to these words of despair by incessant care; though he was himself worn out by the fatigue of the day, he passed the night in administering a quieting drink to the sick man; but lime juice now had lost its power, and friction could not check the progress scurvy was making.

The next day they again laid the poor fellow in the sledge, though he begged them to abandon him where he was and let him die in peace. Then they resumed their march under those horrible circumstances.

The frozen mist penetrated these three men to the bone; snow and sleet beat in their faces; they were doing the work of beasts of burden, but without sufficient nourishment. Duke, like his master, resisted all fatigue; always on the alert, finding out instinctively the best road to take; they even began to trust to his sagacity in moments of doubt.

On the morning of the 23rd of January, in the midst of almost complete darkness, for it was a new moon, Duke was on ahead; for several hours they had lost sight of him; Hatteras was beginning to be uneasy, the more so that numerous bears' tracks were to be seen; they hardly knew what to do when they heard him barking violently.

Hatteras stopped the sledge, and he soon found the dog at the bottom of a ravine.

Duke was pointing and barking before a sort of cairn, made of limestone cemented with ice.

"This time," said the doctor, letting fall the traces, "it is a cairn, there can be no mistake about it."

"What does it matter to us?" said Hatteras.

"Hatteras, it is a cairn, and may contain some valuable information for us; perhaps there are provisions in it; it is well worth looking into."

"And what European ever got as far as this?" said Hatteras, shrugging his shoulders.

"If not Europeans," replied the doctor, "the Esquimaux may have made a cache in this place, and left here the results of some fishing or hunting expedition. It is what they often do."

"Well, examine it, Clawbonny; but I fear you will have your trouble for nothing."

Clawbonny and Bell took their pickaxes and set to work to demolish the cairn. The dog continued barking. A few blows scattered the stones on the ground.

"There is evidently something there," said the doctor.

"I think so too," replied Bell.

The cairn was soon demolished. A cache was discovered in which was a damp piece of paper. The doctor picked it up. Hatteras took the document from him and read :—

"Altam——*Porpoise*, 13 Dec.—1860, 12—° long.—8—35° lat.——"

"The *Porpoise*!" said the doctor.

"The *Porpoise*!" repeated Hatteras. "I don't know any vessel of that name about these seas?"

"It is quite evident," said the doctor, "that navigators, perhaps shipwrecked sailors, have passed here within two months!"

"That is certain," said Bell.

"What shall we do?" asked the doctor.

"Continue our journey," said Hatteras, coldly. "I know nothing about this vessel, the *Porpoise*, but I know the brig, the *Forward*, is expecting us back."





CHAPTER XXXI.

THE DEATH OF SIMPSON.

THEY resumed their journey; each man's mind full of this unexpected discovery, for a meeting in these Arctic climes is the greatest event which could have happened. Hatteras frowned uneasily.

"The *Porpoise*!" said he to himself. "What vessel can that be? And what can she be doing so near the pole?"

Though it was so cold he shivered at the idea. The doctor and Bell only thought of the two possible results from this discovery—save their fellow-creatures or be saved by them.

Difficulties and dangers and fatigue soon overtook them again, and they could only think of their own dangerous position.

Simpson's condition became worse; the doctor saw that his death was at hand. He could do nothing to relieve him; he was suffering cruelly himself from ophthalmia which rendered him nearly blind. The twilight afforded them sufficient light, and this light reflected from the snow, burned their eyes, and it was difficult to guard against it, for the glasses of their spectacles were crusted with ice, and became useless. As it was absolutely necessary to attend to the slightest inequalities of the route and avoid them as much as possible, the doctor was obliged to brave the risk of ophthalmia; however he and Bell took it by turns to keep their eyes covered while one or the other directed the course of the sledge.

On the 25th of January they began to descend; it became still more fatiguing among these frozen declivities; one false step, which it was difficult to avoid, might precipitate them into some deep ravine, and there they would have been beyond all chance of rescue.

Towards evening there was a violent storm of snow, and they were obliged to lie down on the ground; the temperature was so low that they ran the risk of being frozen to death.

Bell and Hatteras, with much trouble, constructed a snow hut, in which they sought shelter. They took a few morsels of pemmican, and a little hot tea; they had only four gallons of spirits of wine left, and they were obliged to use it to quench their thirst, for snow cannot be absorbed in its natural state, it requires to be melted. In temperate countries it is not injurious, but beyond the polar circle it is quite the reverse; it becomes so cold that it is no more possible to touch it than a red hot iron, and there is such a difference of temperature between it and the stomach, that its absorption produces suffocation. The Esquimaux prefer enduring the torments of thirst rather than quench their thirst with snow, which only increases it instead of allaying it.

At three in the morning, while the storm was at its height, the doctor took his turn to watch. He was crouched down in a corner of the hut, when a groan from Simpson attracted his attention; he got up to go to him, when in rising he struck his head violently against the roof. Without paying much attention to this incident, he leaned over Simpson, and began to rub his legs, all swollen and blue. After doing this for a quarter of an hour, he attempted to rise, when he struck his head a second time, though he was still on his knees.

"That is very strange," said he.

He lifted up his hand, and found the roof perceptibly sinking.

"Good Heavens! Hatteras! Bell!" he called out loudly.

"Look out! look out!"

At his cries, Hatteras and Bell jumped up at once, and struck their heads also. They were in profound darkness!

"We shall all be crushed!" cried the doctor. "Outside! outside!"

They dragged Simpson through the opening just in time, before the blocks of ice, which had been put together badly, fell in, with a great noise. These unfortunate men thus found themselves in extreme cold, without shelter from the storm. Hatteras tried to set the tent up, but could not resist the violence of the hurricane, and they were obliged to shelter ~~themselves~~ under the folds of the cloth, which was soon covered with a thick layer of snow, and which, by preventing the heat from escaping, preserved the travellers from being frozen to death.

The squalls only ceased the next day. On harnessing the half-starved dogs, Bell found that three of them had begun to eat their harness; two of them were very weak, and would not go far.

However, the caravan began its march again, as well as it could. They had still sixty miles to go before they could reach the end of their journey.

The 26th, Bell, who was ahead, called out to his companions.

They ran up, and he pointed with stupid astonishment to a gun, leaning against a block of ice.

Hatteras took it up ; it was in perfect preservation and loaded.

"The men belonging to the *Porpoise* cannot be far off," said Clawbonny.

Hatteras, on examining the gun, remarked it was of American make. His hands contracted round the frozen barrel.

"Forward ! forward !" he said, sullenly.

They continued descending the sides of the mountains. Simpson seemed to have lost all sensation ; he no longer complained, the power failed him.

On the 27th they found a sextant almost buried in the snow, then a drinking flask containing brandy, or rather a lump of ice, in the middle of which all the spirit contained in the liquor had become a ball of snow. It was no longer of any use.

Hatteras was evidently unintentionally following the tracks of some great catastrophe ; he was advancing by the only practicable route, and picking the waifs of some horrible disaster. The doctor carefully looked to see if any freshly-made cairns were in sight, but in vain.

Sad reflections came into his mind ; if they discovered these unfortunate fellows, of what service could they be to them ? He and his companions were in want of everything ; their clothes were in rags, food was scarce. If these shipwrecked men were in any number, and dying of hunger, what could they do ? Hatteras seemed inclined to avoid them. Was he not right, since the safety of his crew depended on him ? Ought he to compromise the safety of all by taking strangers on board ? But these strangers were men, and perhaps countrymen ! Weak as were their chances of preservation, ought they to deprive them of them ? He asked Bell's opinion. Bell gave him no answer ; his own sufferings had hardened his heart. Clawbonny did not dare put the question to Hatteras, so he left it to Providence.

On the 17th, towards the evening, Simpson appeared at the last extremity. His stiffened and frozen limbs, his difficult respiration, his convulsive movements, announced his last hour. The expression of his face was terribly despairing, as he glared at the captain with looks of impotent anger. They expressed mute but deserved reproaches ; and the captain felt it so, for he never went near the dying man ; he shunned him, and remained more taciturn, more wrapped up in his own thoughts, than ever.

The following night was a dreadful one ; the storm was more violent than ever : three times was the tent blown over, and the snow drifted in on these poor wretches, blinding them, freezing and piercing them with pointed icicles swept from the neighbouring ice blocks. The dogs howled lamentably. Simpson was lying exposed to this pitiless storm. Bell at last succeeded in setting up again the miserable shelter afforded by the tent cloth, which, if it did not

defend them from the cold, at all events kept off the snow. Put a squall fiercer than its predecessors carried it away again for a fourth time, and dragged it along, while it shrieked and howled with rage.

"Ah ! this is too much to endure," cried Bell.

"Keep up your courage," replied the doctor, clinging to him to save himself from being blown down the ravine.

The rattle was heard in Simpson's throat. All at once he made a last effort, half raised himself up, stretched his closed fist out towards Hatteras, who was watching him with staring eyes, gave one fearful cry, and fell back dead, with his throat incomplete.

"Dead !" cried the doctor.

"Dead !" Bell repeated.

Hatteras, who was moving towards the dead man, was blown back by the violence of the wind.

This was then the first of the crew who fell beneath the influence of this murderous climate, the first who was never to return to port ; the first who, after frightful sufferings, was to pay for the captain's intractable obstinacy with his life.

The dead man had called him murderer ; but Hatteras had not bowed his head under such an accusation. Nevertheless a tear glistened on his eyelid, and froze on his pale cheek.

The doctor and Bell looked at him in terror. Leaning on his long pole, he looked like the genius of these hyperborean regions, erect in the midst of these perpetual whirlwinds, and fatal in his fearful motionlessness.

There he stood, upright, without stirring, until the first hour of twilight ; bold, tenacious, indomitable, and seeming to defy the storm which roared around him.





CHAPTER XXXII.

THE RETURN TO THE FORWARD.

THE wind went down about six in the morning, and changed to the north, driving the clouds in the sky before it; the thermometer showed thirty-three degrees below zero. The first light of dawn silvered that horizon which, in a few days later, it would gild.

Hatteras went up to his two faithful companions, and in a quiet, melancholy voice, said—

“My friends, we are still more than sixty miles from the spot mentioned by Sir Edward Belcher. We have only what is strictly sufficient to enable us to rejoin the ship. If we go on it would be to expose ourselves to certain death without any one being the better for it. We must turn back again.”

“A very wise resolution, Hatteras,” replied the doctor; “I would have followed you wherever it pleased you to go; but our health is getting weaker every day. I quite approve of your plan of returning.”

“Is that your opinion also, Bell?” asked Hatteras.

“Yes, captain.”

“Then,” continued Hatteras, “we will take two days’ rest. It is not too much, the sledge requires repairs. I think we had better build a snow hut to rest ourselves in.”

This point settled, the three men set to work vigorously. Bell took every precaution to insure the strength of the edifice, and they soon raised a retreat sufficiently large, at the bottom of the ravine, where they had made their last halt.

No doubt it had cost Hatteras many a pang to break off his journey in this manner. So much labour and fatigue in vain! A useless expedition, paid for by the death of a man! Return on board without a morsel of coal! What must become of the crew? To

what excesses might they not be carried inspired by Shandon? and Hatteras was no longer to struggle any further. All his care was now bestowed on their preparations for returning; the sledge was repaired, its load was much diminished, it had now but two hundred weight to carry. They patched up their old torn clothes, saturated with snow and hardened with frost; new moccasins and snow shoes replaced the others quite worn out. This work occupied the 29th and the morning of the 30th; and the travellers rested and cheered themselves up as well as they could.

The doctor had been watching Duke while they were in the snow hut, and in the ice in the ravine. His extraordinary proceedings did not seem natural to him; the animal was continually circling about one spot, a sort of elevation or swelling of the ground produced by several layers of ice. Duke, as he smelt about, whimpered and wagged his tail impatiently, looking up at his master's face.

The doctor at first was inclined to attribute his restlessness to the presence of Simpson's body, which his companions had not yet found time to bury. They resolved to perform that sad ceremony the same day.

Bell and the doctor took their picks, and directed their steps to the bottom of the ravine. The spot which had attracted Duke seemed a fitting place for a grave; it was necessary to bury him deep in the ground to preserve the body from the claws of the bears.

They began by removing the upper layer of soft snow, then the hardened ice; at the third blow of the pick the doctor encountered a hard body which broke; he picked up some of the pieces and found they were parts of a glass bottle, and, on his side, Bell discovered a small biscuit bag, still containing a few crumbs.

"What does all this mean?" asked Bell, suspending his occupation.

The doctor called Hatteras, who came immediately.

Duke still continued barking, and tried to scratch the thick layers of snow away with his paws.

"Do you think we have come on a depot of provisions?" said the doctor.

"Very possible," replied Bell.

"Go on," said Hatteras.

Some remains of food were also found, and a box about a quarter full of pemmican.

"If it is a cache," observed Hatteras, "the bears have certainly visited it before us. You see these provisions are not untouched."

"I fear so," replied the doctor, "for——"

He did not finish his sentence, for a cry from Bell interrupted him. The latter, in dislodging a tolerably large block of ice, brought to view a stiff and frozen leg, projecting through the interstices of the lumps of ice.

"A body!" cried the doctor.

"It is not a cache," replied Hatteras, "it is a grave."

When the body was uncovered it proved to be that of a seaman about thirty years of age, in a perfect state of preservation. He was clothed like an Arctic navigator; the doctor was unable to fix the period of his death.

Close to this body Bell discovered a second, that of a man about fifty, whose face betrayed the sufferings which had shortened his life.

"These bodies have not been buried, they have been surprised by death just as we find them."

"You are right, Dr. Clawbonny," said Bell.

"Go on, go on," said Hatteras.

Bell was rather disinclined to do so. Who could say how many human bodies that hillock contained?

"These men have been victims to the same accident as that which happened to ourselves," said the doctor; "their snow hut has fallen in on them. Let us see if any of them are still alive."

The place was rapidly cleared away, and Bell came upon a third body, that of a man about forty; he had not the same cadaverous look as the others. The doctor examined him and fancied there were some signs of life in him still.

"He is alive!" he cried.

Bell and he carried him into the snow hut, while Hatteras stood motionless, looking at the fallen-in hut.

The doctor undressed the unfortunate they had just dug up, and found no trace of injury on him. With Bell's assistance he rubbed him vigorously with tow, soaked in spirits of wine, and he could feel life returning by degrees, but the unfortunate man was in such a state of prostration that he was quite unable to speak, and his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth as if it was frozen.

The doctor searched his pockets. They were empty. No papers or documents, so he left Bell to continue the friction, and returned to Hatteras.

The latter had descended into the ruins of the snow hut, and had carefully searched about, and came out again holding in his hand the half-burned fragment of an envelope.

These words were still to be traced on it—

—tamont
—*orpoise*
—w York.

"Altamont!" cried the doctor, "of the ship the *Porpoise*, of New York!"

"An American!" said Hatteras.

"I shall save him," said the doctor, "I will answer for it, and then we shall have this frightful enigma explained."

He returned to Altamont, while Hatteras stood buried in his reflections.

Thanks to his care, the doctor succeeded in bringing the poor fellow to life again, but not to feeling; he could neither see, nor hear, nor speak, but still he was alive.

The next day Hatteras said to the doctor, "We must start without any more delay."

Let us start at once, Hatteras; the sledge is not loaded, and we will put this unfortunate fellow in it, and take him back to the ship."

"Do so, but let us first bury these bodies."

The two unknown seamen were replaced under the ruins of the snow hut; the corpse of Simpson replaced that of Altamont. The three travellers gave a sigh, in form of a prayer, to the memory of their companion, and at seven in the morning they set out on their return to the ship.

Two of the team of dogs having died, Duke volunteered his services and did his duty well.

The next twenty days produced the same incidents on their return as in their journey out. But February being the coldest month of the year, the ice offered everywhere a good surface to travel on. The travellers suffered horribly from the cold, but not from gales or squalls.

The sun had reappeared for the first time since the 31st of January; every day he remained a little longer above the horizon. Bell and the doctor were quite worn out, nearly blind, and half lame; the carpenter could only walk upon crutches.

Altamont was still alive, but in a complete state of insensibility. Sometimes they despaired of him, but care and attention rallied him again: and the brave doctor had great need of his own care, for fatigue had quite broken him down.

Hatteras was thinking about his brig, the *Forward*. In what condition was he likely to find her? What had happened on board? Would Johnson be able to resist Shandon and his allies? The cold had been dreadful. Had they quite burned the unfortunate ship? Had they spared his masts and spars?

Hatteras marched on, pondering over these questions, when, on the 24th of February, he came to a sudden stop. At three hundred yards before him a red light appeared, above which there hung an immense column of black smoke, which lost itself in the grey mists of the sky.

"That smoke!" cried he to himself: his heart was beating as if it would break.

"Look there, see that smoke!" said he to his two companions who had come up to him; "my ship is on fire!"

"We are more than three miles from her," returned Bell; "it can't be the *Forward*."

"Yes, it is," replied the doctor; "it is the effect of the mirage which makes it seem so near."

"Let us run," cried Hatteras, outstripping his companions, who left the sledge in charge of Duke, and hurried after the captain.

An hour after they came in sight of the ship. It was a horrible sight. The brig was blazing, surrounded by melting ice; her hull was enveloped in flames. Five hundred yards from her a man was standing, waving his arms about in front of the flaming ship. It was old Johnson, all alone.

Hatteras ran up to him.

"My ship! my ship! what have you done with my ship?"

"You here, captain? Stay, not a step farther!"

"Well?" cried Hatteras, in a threatening tone.

"The wretches! They left here forty-eight hours ago," said Johnson, "after setting fire to the ship."

"Curses on them!" cried Hatteras.

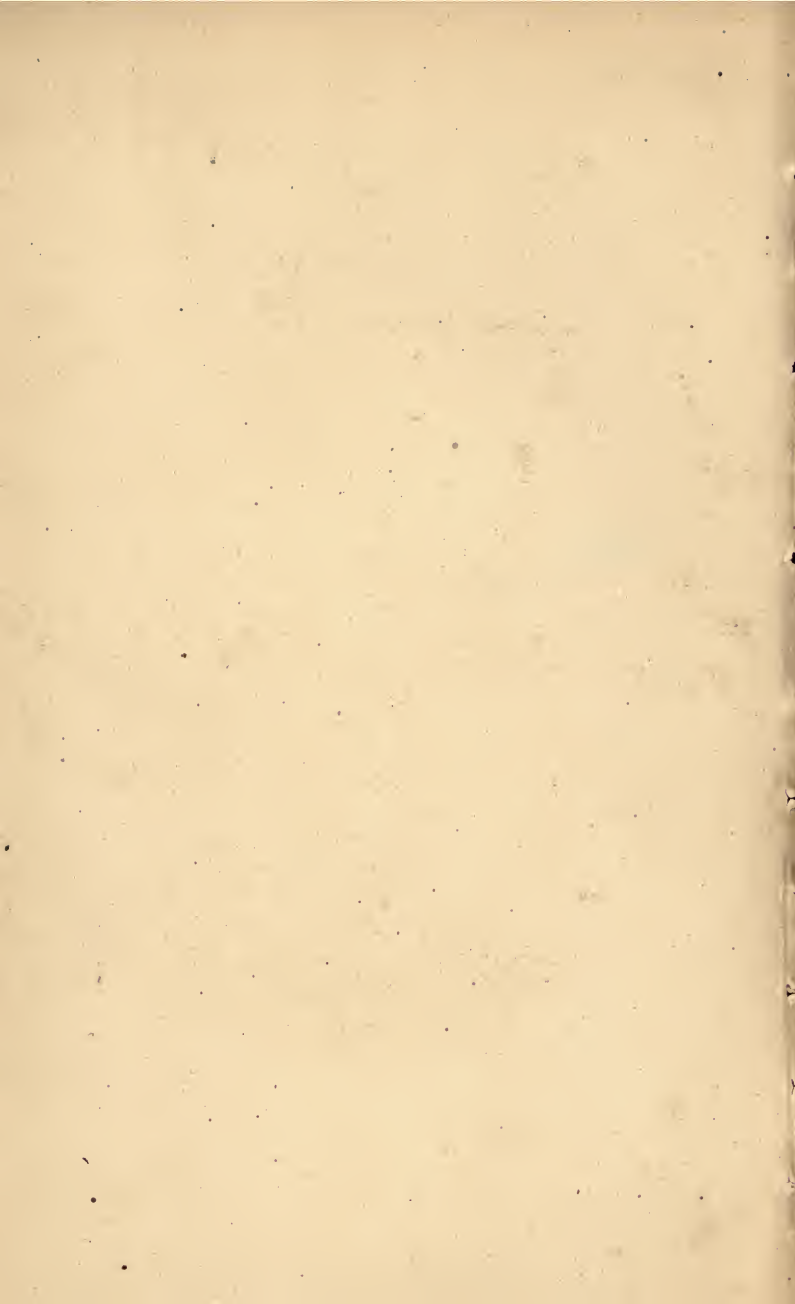
A tremendous explosion took place, the ground shook, icebergs were flung down on the ice, a column of smoke rolled upwards to the sky, and the *Forward*, her powder magazine having exploded, disappeared in a fiery abyss.

Just at that moment the doctor and Bell came up to Hatteras, who, for a moment lost in despair, suddenly recovered himself, and cried out—

"The cowards have deserted, my friends, but the brave will succeed; Johnson and Bell, you are brave men; doctor, you are a man of science; I, I have faith: the North Pole is there; on, then, to the North Pole!"

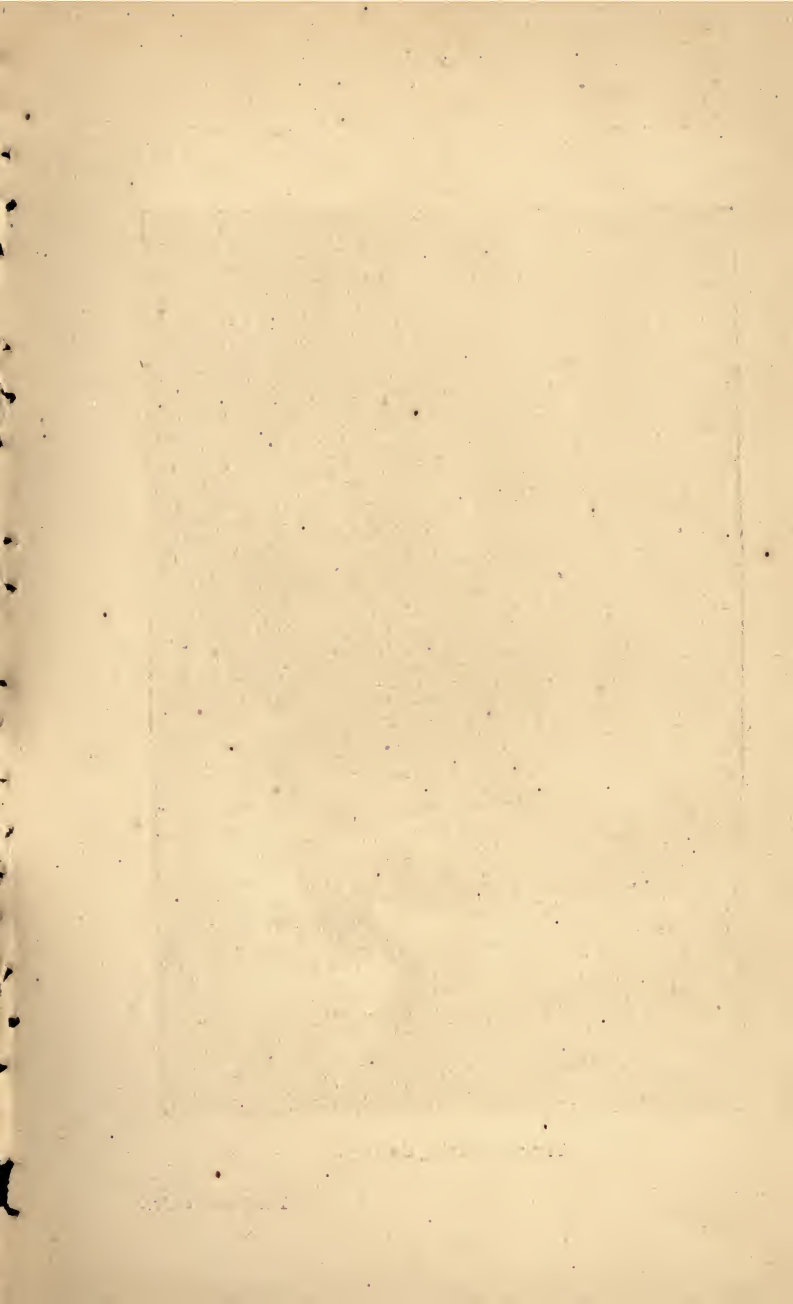
This energetic address revived his companions' courage. Still it was a terrible situation for these four men, and a dying one, abandoned without resource; lost, all alone, under the eightieth degree of latitude, and in the depths of the polar regions.





THE DESERT OF ICE.

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The men leaving the ship.

THE
DESERT OF ICE.

BY
JULES VERNE,

AUTHOR OF "ROUND THE WORLD IN EIGHTY DAYS," "FIVE WEEKS IN A BALLOON,"
ETC., ETC.

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THE DESERT OF ICE.

CHAPTER I.

THE DOCTOR'S INVENTORY.

CAPTAIN HATTERAS'S design to reach the North, and so to attribute the glory of discovering the North Pole to England, was a bold one. That hardy seaman had just performed all that the limits of human power permitted. After having struggled for nine months against storm and tempest, burst asunder icebergs, and broken a passage through fields of ice—after having struggled against the cold of a winter severer than any hitherto experienced, even in hyperborean regions—after having confirmed his predecessors' labours by his own, ~~and corrected~~, so to say, the history of his forerunners' discoveries—after ~~leaving~~ forced his vessel, the "Forward," beyond seas hitherto surveyed—in fact, after having accomplished half his object, he saw his grand project suddenly annihilated. The treason—or, rather, the discouragement—of his crew, tried as they had been, and the foolish and criminal intrigues of some among them, left him in a frightful position. Of the eighteen men who embarked at Liverpool, there remained but four—abandoned without resources—without a vessel—more than two thousand five hundred miles from their own country. The blowing up of the "Forward," which had just happened before their eyes, deprived them of the last means of existence.

Yet the courage of Hatteras did not fail him, even in presence of such a terrible catastrophe. The companions remaining with him

were the best of his crew—men of a really heroic stamp. He appealed to Doctor Clawbonny's scientific acquirements, to Johnson and Bell's devotedness, and his own faith in his enterprise; he dared to talk to them of hope in this desperate situation. His brave comrades listened to him; and the past conduct of men of such resolution was a guarantee for their courage in the future.

After the Captain's energetic address, the Doctor determined to obtain an exact idea of their situation; and, leaving his companions standing about five hundred paces from the wreck, he turned his steps towards the theatre of the catastrophe.

Nothing remained of that so carefully-constructed "Forward"; shapeless ruins, black and calcined timbers, iron bolts twisted out of all shape, burning coils of cable, and, at some distance, little spiral columns of smoke about the ice-field, bore witness to the violence of the explosion. The fore-castle gun was lying on a block of ice several fathoms distant from the wreck. The ground was strewn with fragments of all description within a radius of six hundred yards; the brig's keel was lying under a heap of ice; and the icebergs, which had been partially melted by the heat, had already returned to the hardness of granite.

Then came into the Doctor's mind the recollection of his devastated cabin; of his collections lost for ever; his precious instruments broken to pieces; and his books torn and reduced to ashes—such a wealth of information annihilated! He could not help contemplating this immense disaster with tears in his eyes—thinking not of the future, but of this irreparable misfortune, which struck him so directly.

He was soon rejoined by Johnson. The old seaman's face bore traces of his late sufferings. He had had to struggle against his mutinous mates, in defending the vessel committed to his care.

The Doctor gave him his hand, which the boatswain shook sadly.

"What is to become of us, my friend?" said the Doctor.

"Who can say?" replied Johnson.

"Above all, we must not give way to despair, but be men."

"Yes, Mr. Clawbonny; you are quite right. It is at the moment of great disasters that great resolution is most necessary. We are in a bad way; we must do our best to get out of it."

"Poor 'Forward!'" said the Doctor, with a sigh; "I was quite attached to her; I loved her as a man loves his own home, or the

home in which his whole life has been passed ; and now there is not a bit left to know her by."

"No one could believe, Mr. Clawbonny, that that collection of timbers and planks had not a place in our hearts."

"And the boat?" said the Doctor, looking about him; "even the boat did not escape."

"Yes it did, Mr. Clawbonny; Shandon and his men took it away with them."

"And the long-boat?"

"Blown to pieces. Look: here are some bits of iron-plating still warm; that is all that is left of it."

"Then all we have left is the caoutchouc boat?"

"Yes; because you, very luckily, took it with you."

"That is but little," said the Doctor.

"The miserable deserters," said Johnson; "I wish Heaven may punish them as they deserve."

"Johnson," replied the Doctor, gently, "you must not forget how severely suffering tried them. It is only the best of men who can stand firm in misfortune, where the weak fail. Let us pity, and not curse, our comrades in misfortune."

The Doctor then remained silent for a few moments, and looked uneasily all round him.

"What is become of the sledge?" asked Johnson.

"We left it about a mile behind."

"In charge of Simpson?"

"No, my friend; poor Simpson died of fatigue."

"Died?" cried the boatswain.

"Dead!" replied the Doctor.

"Poor fellow! But, who knows?—Perhaps we ought to envy him."

"And instead of a dead man, whom we left behind, we have brought back a dying one."

"A dying man?"

"Yes; a Captain Altamont."

In a few words, the Doctor made the boatswain acquainted with the whole affair.

"An American!" said Johnson, reflectingly.

"Yes; there is every reason to believe this man belongs to the United States. But what vessel can this 'Porpoise' be, which has

evidently been wrecked somewhere?—And what could she be doing in these regions?"

"She came to perish," replied Johnson; "she brought her crew hither to die—as have all those who have been led by their rashness into similar climes. But, Mr. Clawbonny, I suppose you reached the place you intended?"

"The coal depot?" replied the Doctor, shaking his head. "No; our provisions failed us, and the fatigue of the journey broke us down. We never reached the point described by Sir Edward Belcher."

"So, then, you have brought no fuel back—nor food?"

"No."

"And now we have no ship to carry us back to England."

Both the Doctor and Johnson were silent. It required great courage to look this terrible situation in the face.

"Well," said the boatswain, at last, "our situation is clear enough, at all events. We know what we have to look forward to. But we must first do what is most pressing. We must build a snow house."

"Yes," replied the Doctor; "with Bell to help us that will be easy. Then we will go and fetch the sledge; we will bring the American back with us, and we will consult Hatteras what is next to be done."

The Doctor and the boatswain returned to their companions. Hatteras was standing with his arms folded, as usual; his face looked as resolved as ever. What could that extraordinary man be thinking about? No one could have conjectured, for it made no outward sign. His faithful "Duke" was with him, braving by his side a temperature of 32 deg. below zero. Bell lay stretched on the ice, motionless: he seemed quite lifeless; his insensibility might cost him his life; he risked being frozen into a block of ice.

Johnson shook him vigorously, rubbed him with snow, and succeeded, with some trouble, in rousing him from his state of stupor.

"Come, Bell; courage!" said he; "you must not give way. Get up; I want to talk to you about our situation; and we must have shelter somewhere. Come and help me to build a snow hut. Come, Bell. Here is an iceberg; it only wants to be hollowed out; that will give us what we cannot do without now—courage, and a good heart."

Bell rallied a little, and let his friend lead him away.

"In the mean time, Mr. Clawbonny," said the old sailor, "will you go and bring up the sledge?"

"I am off at once, and I will be back in an hour."

"Won't you go with him, Captain?"

The latter, though deep in reflection, heard the boatswain's question, for he answered him, in a very gentle tone:—

"No, my friend; if the Doctor will take the trouble. We shall have to come to some decision before the end of the day, and I must be alone to think it over. Go, and do whatever you think necessary for the present, while I think over the future."

"It is very strange," said Johnson, joining the Doctor; "the Captain seems to have quite forgotten his temper: his voice never seemed so kind."

"So much the better; he is recovering his coolness. Believe me, Johnson, that is the only man to save us."

So saying, the Doctor pulled his hood over his face; and, taking his pole in his hand, started off for the sledge, in a mist rendered almost light by the moon's rays.

Johnson and Bell set to work; the old sailor stirred up the carpenter (who worked away in silence) by talking to him; they had not to build, but only to hollow out a great block. The hardness of the ice rendered it a difficult task; but, in return, this very hardness made it secure. They were soon able to work under cover in the hollow they were making.

Hatteras walked up and down; then, stopping short, it was clear he avoided going near the wreck of the brig.

As he had promised, the Doctor was soon back again: he brought Altamont, stretched out on the sledge, and wrapped up in the tent-cloth; the Greenland dogs, half-starved and tired as they were, could hardly drag it along. It was time the whole party—men and dogs—had rest and food.

While they were hollowing out a habitation, the Doctor, in searching about, had found a small stove, which the explosion had left uninjured; its bent chimney was easily straightened, and the Doctor brought it back in triumph. In three hours' time they were able to take possession of their home; the stove was fitted into it; it was filled with splinters of wood, and it soon gave out a beneficent heat.

The American was carried in and laid down at the far end, on

rugs and blankets; the four Englishmen sat round the fire. Their last provisions were brought from the sledge: a little biscuit and hot tea cheered them up, in some degree. Hatteras did not speak, and everyone respected his silence.

When they had finished their meal, the Doctor took Johnson outside, and said:—

“Now we must all set to work, and make an inventory of all we have left. We must know exactly the state of our resources; there they lie, scattered about. We must collect them together, for it may snow at any moment, and then we shall not be able to recover anything.”

“We have no time to lose, then,” replied Johnson. “Provisions and fuel—they are both of immediate necessity.”

“We must each search on one side,” replied the Doctor, “so as to go over the whole extent of the explosion. We had better begin at the centre, and work towards the circumference.”

They first went to the iceberg where the “Forward” had been lying, and carefully examined the ruins of the vessel by the moon’s dubious light. It was like a hunt. The Doctor entered upon it with the zeal, if not with the pleasure, of a sportsman; and his heart leaped every time he fell in with some case apparently uninjured; but most of them were empty, and their contents were strewed all over the ice.

The violence of the explosion had been very considerable; a great number of objects were only dust and cinders. The larger parts of the engine lay here and there, bent and broken; the fans of the screw had been hurled more than a hundred yards from the ship, and were buried deep in the frozen snow; the cylinders had been torn from their beds; the funnel, split open lengthways, with its chains still hanging to it, was half-buried under an enormous block of ice; all the smaller parts of the engine, and bolts, rivets, the iron rudder-head, copper sheathing, and all the brig’s metal-work, lay scattered about in every direction.

But all this iron, which would have been a fortune to a tribe of Esquimaux, was of no earthly use under existing circumstances. Their first object was to find provisions; and the Doctor made but little discovery of anything of that sort.

“This is a bad look-out,” said he to himself. “It is clear the galley, which was close to the magazine, has been entirely annihi-

lated by the explosion. What has not been burnt has been reduced to powder. This is a bad job, and if Johnson has had no better luck than I, I don't see what is to become of us."

Continuing his quest, however, he succeeded in picking up the remains of some pemmican, in all about fifteen pounds, and four stone bottles, unbroken, which had been flung a distance into some soft snow, and contained five or six pints of brandy. Further on he picked up two packets of scurvy-grass seeds, which came very apropos to replace the lime-juice they had lost.

But they recovered neither hammocks, nor clothes, nor blankets; the fire had evidently destroyed them all.

The Doctor and Johnson, on comparing notes, found their discoveries were, alas! but unimportant, as far as food was concerned: a few pieces of salt meat, about fifty pounds of pemmican, three bags of biscuit, a small supply of chocolate, brandy, and about two pounds of coffee, picked up on the ice, grain by grain.

Altogether, the Doctor and the boatswain had collected provisions sufficient for three weeks, by exercising the strictest economy; that was little enough for men in their exhausted state.

Thus, in consequence of a succession of misfortunes, Hatteras, after failing to find coal, now found himself on the brink of starvation. The fuel supplied by the wreck of the ship—bits of her spars, and her bottom—might, perhaps, last three weeks; but the Doctor, before making use of it to warm the snow hut, inquired of Johnson if any of it was available for building a small sloop, or even a boat; but the boatswain told him there was not a single piece sufficiently uninjured to be of the least service; the use they could make of it would be to warm themselves with it for a few days, and then——

"And then?" said the Doctor.

"We must put our trust in God," replied the brave old seaman.

After finishing the inventory, the Doctor and Johnson went and fetched the sledge, harnessed the unwilling, exhausted team of dogs to it, returned with it to the scene of the explosion, loaded it with its now so precious cargo, and conveyed it to the ice house. Then they rested themselves, half-frozen, by the side of their companions in misery.



CHAPTER II

ALTAMONT SPEAKS FOR THE FIRST TIME.

ABOUT eight in the evening the sky became for a few moments free from snowy mist, the stars shone out in a still colder atmosphere. Hatteras profited by the change to ascertain the altitude of certain stars. He went out without speaking to anyone, carrying his instruments with him. He also wished to be sure of his position, and whether the ice-field had drifted. At the end of half-an-hour, he returned, lay down in a corner of the hut, and remained in a state of quietude which could not be that of sleep.

The next day snow began to fall very heavily; the Doctor congratulated himself on the labours of the previous day; for a vast white curtain now covered the ice-field, and every trace of the explosion was covered by a shroud of snow three feet thick.

This day it was impossible to set foot out of doors; fortunately, their habitation was comfortable—or at least seemed to be so to these wearied travellers. The little stove did its duty, had it not been that the smoke was sometimes driven down the funnel by the wind; its heat supplied them with boiling hot tea and coffee, the influence of which is wonderful in low temperatures.

The shipwrecked mariners (for so we may call them) felt themselves in a state of comfort to which they had so long been strangers, that they did not trouble themselves for the moment about anything beyond the present—this beneficent repose and warmth, forgetting, and almost defying, the future, which was threatening them with approaching death.

The American's sufferings became less severe; little by little he returned to life; he could open his eyes, but he could not speak; his lips betrayed the remains of scurvy, and he could utter no articu-

late sound; still he could hear, and his present state was explained to him. He moved his head in sign of thanks; he felt himself rescued from his grave in the snow. The Doctor was prudent enough not to say how near he had been to death, and how short a time he still was from it; for, in a fortnight, or three weeks at the most, their provisions must be exhausted.

Towards mid-day, Hatteras roused himself; he moved closer to Johnson, Bell, and the Doctor. "My friends!" said he, "we must come to some resolution as to what remains to be done; but I would first beg Johnson to tell me under what circumstances this act of treachery which has been our ruin was accomplished?"

"Why tell us?" said the Doctor. "The fact is certain—better not think of it."

"I think just the contrary," replied Hatteras. "But when Johnson has once told the story, I shall think of it no more."

"This, then, is how it happened," began the boatswain. "I did all I could to prevent this crime."

"I am sure of it, Johnson, and I will add that I am sure the mutineers had arrived at the idea of what they did some time since."

"I think so, too!" added the Doctor.

"So do I!" continued Johnson; "for almost immediately after you left, Captain, the very next day, Shandon, who was very bitter against you, supported by the rest, took the command. I offered what resistance I could, but in vain. From that time every man did pretty much what he liked. Shandon allowed it; he wanted to let the crew see that the period of fatigue and privations was over. No more economy of any sort was exercised; they kept up a great fire in the stove; they burned all the brig's bulwarks. Provisions and liquors were at the mercy of the crew, and you may guess how men who had been deprived of drink so long conducted themselves. So things went on from the 7th to the 15th of January."

"So!" said Hatteras, gravely; "it was Shandon who instigated the crew to mutiny?"

"Yes, Captain!"

"Let us think no more about him! Go on, Johnson!"

"About the 24th or 25th of January, they projected abandoning the ship. They determined to gain the west coast of Baffin's Bay; once there, with the boat, they would try to fall in with a whaler, or

else reach some of the Greenland establishments on the eastern shore. There was abundance of provisions ; and the sick, excited by the hope of returning home, recovered fast. So they began preparing for their departure. They built a sledge adapted to conveying their fuel, provisions, and the boat ; the men, of course, were to drag it. That occupied them till the 15th of February. I was always in hopes, Captain, of seeing you arrive, and still I dreaded it ; for you would have had no influence over the crew, who would have murdered you rather than remain on board. It was liberty run mad. I took them all, one after the other, to task ; I tried to make them understand the danger of such an expedition, and their cowardice in abandoning you. I could not even bring over the better men to my will. The day of departure was fixed for the 22nd of February ; Shandon grew impatient—they loaded the sledge and the boat full of provisions and liquor, and they took a quantity of wood with them. The starboard side of the vessel was cut down to her water-line. The last day was a day of excess ; they plundered the vessel, and in a drunken fit, Pen and two or three others set the ship on fire. I tried to defend the vessel ; but they beat me and threw me down, and then the wretches, headed by Shandon, took a direction eastward and disappeared. I was left all alone ; what could I do against a fire which was gaining every part of the ship ? The fire-main was frozen ; I had not a drop of water. The ‘ Forward ’ was a victim to the flames for two days, and you know the rest.”

At the close of the boatswain’s account, a long silence reigned in the ice house. This gloomy description of the burning of the ship, the loss of the precious brig, made a strong impression on the minds of the deserted travellers ; they felt themselves face to face with the impossible, and the impossible was—a return home. They did not dare to look one another in the face, fearing to surprise a look of the despair which possessed them on their companions’ faces. All that was audible was the American’s laboured respiration.

At last Hatteras spoke.

“ Johnson,” said he, “ I thank you for doing all you could to save my ship ; but, alone, what could you do ? Still I do thank you ; now let us say no more about the catastrophe. We must unite our efforts for the welfare of us all. Here we are four companions, four friends, and on the life of one of us may depend the lives of the others. Now let each man give his opinion as to what is best to be done.”

"You had better question us, Hatteras," replied the Doctor; "we are all your devoted friends, and we speak from our hearts; first tell us what is your idea?"

"I am the only one who cannot have one," said Hatteras, sadly; "my opinion would seem an interested one. I wish to have your opinions on the subject."

"Captain," said Johnson, "before deciding on this important subject, I wish to ask you a question."

"Speak, Johnson."

"You took an observation yesterday; has the ice-field drifted, or is it still in the same position?"

"It has not stirred," replied Hatteras; "I found it, as it was before our departure, 80 deg. 15 min. latitude, and 97 deg. 35 min. longitude."

"And," said Johnson; "how far are we from the sea at the nearest point west?"

"About six hundred miles."

"And this sea is——?"

"Smith's Straits."

"The same we were unable to get through last April?"

"The same."

"Well, Captain, now we know our situation, and we are in a position to come to some decision accordingly."

"Speak, then," said Hatteras, letting his head fall between his hands. In this position he could hear his companions without looking at them.

"Now, Bell," said the Doctor, "in your opinion, what is the best course to take?"

"It does not require much thinking," replied the carpenter. "We must return without losing a day nor an hour, either to the south or the west, and try to reach the nearest coast—even if the journey took us two months!"

"We have only provisions for three weeks," said Hatteras, without raising his head.

"Then," returned Johnson, "we must do it in three weeks, since it is our only chance of escape; even if we have to reach the coast on our hands and knees, we must set out and arrive there in twenty-five days."

"That part of the Arctic continent is not known," returned

Hatteras; "we shall fall in with obstacles—icebergs and glaciers—which will stop our advance."

"I don't see," replied the Doctor, "a sufficient reason in that for not attempting the journey. We shall have to suffer a great deal, there is no doubt of it; we shall have to restrict ourselves to what is just sufficient to keep us alive, unless we shoot——"

"We have hardly half-a-pound of powder left," observed Hatteras.

"Come, Hatteras," said the Doctor; "I know what all your objections mean, and I hope I am right; but I think I can see you have some practicable project."

"No, I have not," said the Captain, after a few moments' hesitation.

"You cannot doubt our courage," resumed the Doctor. "We are men to follow you to the end, and you know it; but at this moment ought you not to abandon all hope of our reaching the Pole? Treachery has ruined all your plans; you have succeeded in your struggle against the obstacles nature threw in your way, but not against men's faithlessness and weakness; you have done all it was humanly possible to do, and you would have succeeded, I am sure of it; but in the position in which you actually find yourself, are you not forced to postpone your projects, and even in order to resume them at a future period, would you not attempt first to return to England?"

"Well, Captain?" asked Johnson of Hatteras, who remained a long time without answering.

At last the Captain raised his head, and said in a hesitating tone—

"Do you, then, believe you are sure of reaching the shore of the bay, weak as you are, and so short of provisions?"

"No," replied the Doctor, "but it is quite certain the coast will not come to meet us; so we must go and look for it. It may be we shall fall in with Esquimaux tribes farther south, with whom we may be able to establish some relations."

"Besides," returned Johnson, "it is possible we might fall in with some vessel in the strait, obliged to winter there."

"And if necessary," the Doctor went on, "since the strait is frozen, why should we not cross it and reach the west coast of Greenland, and thence, either by Cape Prudhoe, or Cape York, arrive at some Danish settlement? To conclude, Hatteras, we

shall find no such prospect here on this ice-field. The route to England is down there to the south, and not here to the north."

"Yes," said Bell, "Mr Clawbonny is right; we must start at once. We have too long forgotten our country and all those dear to us."

"Is that your opinion, Johnson?" again asked Hatteras.

"Yes, Captain."

"And yours too, Clawbonny?"

"Yes, Hatteras."

Hatteras became silent again. His face, in spite of his efforts, betrayed his agitation. The fate of his whole life depended on the course he was now obliged to take: if he retraced his steps, there was an end for ever to his bold projects; he could not hope to succeed in a fourth attempt of the same sort.

The Doctor, seeing the Captain said nothing, went on with his argument—

"I would also add, Hatteras, we have not a moment to lose; we must load the sledge with our provisions and carry with us as much wood as possible. A journey of six hundred miles under these circumstances is a long one, I admit, but not absolutely impossible; we could—or at least we ought to—do twenty miles a day, which will allow us to reach the coast in a month, that is to say, about the 26th of March——"

"But," said Hatteras, "why not wait a few days?"

"What do you hope from that?" asked Johnson

"I don't know. Who can see what the future may bring us? It is always something if we recover our strength a little! You will not have gone two stages before you sink with fatigue, without even the shelter of a snow hut."

"But a horrible death awaits us here!" cried Bell.

"My friends," said Hatteras—and his voice was almost that of a suppliant—"you despair too soon! If I were to propose to seek a road to safety northward, you would refuse to follow me. And yet, are there not near the Pole tribes of Esquimaux, as there are in Smith's Straits? This open sea, the existence of which is perfectly certain, must wash the shores of other continents. Nature is logical in all her actions. Well, then, we must believe that the vegetable kingdom begins again where great cold ceases. Is there

not a promised land awaiting us at the Pole, which you wish to fly for ever?"

Hatteras became more and more animated as he continued speaking; his overheated imagination evoked an enchanting picture of these very problematical regions.

"One day longer!" he repeated; "only an hour!"

Doctor Clawbonny, with his adventurous disposition and his ardent imagination, felt himself by degrees moved to speak. He would have given way; but Johnson, cooler and wiser, recalled him to reason and duty.

"Come, Bell!" said he, "to the sledge."

"Come!" repeated Bell.

The two sailors moved towards the opening of the ice house.

"Oh, Johnson!—you leave me—you?" cried Hatteras. "Well, go; I shall stay here."

"Captain," began Johnson, stopping involuntarily.

"I shall stay behind, I tell you. Go; leave me, as the others did; go!"

"Come here, 'Duke'; we two will stay here."

The dog went to his master and began to bark. Johnson looked at the Doctor, who was at a loss what to do. The best thing would be to calm Hatteras, and sacrifice one day to his ideas. The Doctor was trying to make up his mind when he felt something touch his arm.

He looked round and saw the American, who had left his blankets, he was crawling along the ground, and from his dry lips he was trying to utter some inarticulate sounds.

The Doctor, almost frightened, watched him in silence. Hatteras went up to the American and examined him attentively. He tried to distinguish the words the poor fellow was unable to pronounce. At last, after being five minutes making the attempt, he brought out the word "Porpoise."

The "Porpoise!" cried the Captain.

The American made a sign of assent.

"In these seas," asked Hatteras; his heart beating all the time. Again the American assented.

"To the northward?"

"Yes."

"And you know her position?"

"Yes."

"Exactly?"

"Yes," again nodded the American.

"Listen attentively," said Hatteras to the sick man; "we must know the ship's exact position. Now I am going to count the degrees aloud; you must make a sign to stop me."

The American again nodded assent.

"Now," said Hatteras, "these are the degrees of longitude—a hundred and five? No. A hundred and six?—a hundred and seven?—a hundred and eight?—are you sure it is the westward?"

The American nodded.

"I am going on—a hundred and nine?—a hundred and ten?—a hundred and twelve?—a hundred and fourteep?—a hundred and sixteen?—a hundred and eighteen?—a hundred and nineteen?—a hundred and twenty——?"

"Yes," nodded Altamont.

"A hundred and twenty degrees of longitude," said Hatteras; "and how many minutes?—I begin counting. . . ."

Hatteras began at number one, Altamont signed to him to stop at number fifteen.

"Good," said Hatteras; "now for the latitude. You understand me. Eighty?—eighty-one?—eighty-two?—eighty-three?—" The American stopped him again.

"Good!—and the minutes? Five?—ten?—fifteen?—twenty?—twenty-five?—thirty?—thirty-five——?"

A new sign of assent from Altamont, who smiled feebly.

"Then," continued Hatteras, gravely; "the 'Porpoise' is in longitude 120 deg. 15 min. and latitude 83 deg. 35 min."

"Yes," nodded the American; this time falling back exhausted into the Doctor's arms.

This last exertion had been too much for him.

"My friends," cried Hatteras; "you see now our safety lies to the north, always to the north! We shall save ourselves."

But no sooner had he uttered these expressions of satisfaction than he seemed struck as if some terrible idea had suddenly occurred to him; his face changed, he felt the serpent's tooth of jealousy bite him to the heart.

Another, and an American, had passed him by three degrees on the route to the Pole. Why, what could have been his object?



CHAPTER III.

SEVENTEEN DAYS' MARCH.

THIS new incident—these first words of Altamont—had completely changed the travellers' situation. Hitherto they had felt themselves removed from all hopes of succour, with no real expectation of ever gaining Baffin's Bay; threatened with a want of food much too long for their wearied bodies; and now, at less than four hundred miles from their habitation of snow, there was a vessel in existence which offered them vast resources, and, it might be, also the means of prosecuting their bold attempt to reach the Pole. Hatteras, the Doctor, Johnson, and Bell began to hope once more, after having been so near despair; they were almost crazy with delight.

But the information they had gleaned from Altamont was, as yet, incomplete; and, after a few minutes' rest, the Doctor recommenced this interesting conversation. He put his questions to him in such a form that a nod of the head, or a glance of the eye, was a sufficient answer. He soon ascertained that the "Porpoise" was an American three-masted ship from New York, wrecked in the ice, freighted with provisions and coals. Though lying on her broadside, she had probably held together, and it would be possible to save the cargo.

Altamont and his crew had abandoned her two months ago, taking a boat with them on a sledge. Their intention was to gain Smith's Straits, wait for some whaler, and thus obtain a passage home to America; but, by degrees, fatigue and disease overtook them, and they succumbed, one by one, on the journey. At last, out of a crew of thirty men, only the captain and two men were left; and that he, Altamont, still survived was really owing to the interposition of Providence.

Hatteras wanted to know how the American ship had got into so high a latitude.

Altamont made him understand that he had been carried there by the ice.

Hatteras anxiously questioned him about the object of his voyage.

Altamont gave him to understand he had attempted the North-west Passage.

Hatteras would not press him further, and so asked him no more questions.

Then the Doctor began to examine him.

"Now," said he, "all our efforts ought to tend to discover the 'Porpoise,' instead of risking a journey to Baffin's Bay. We might find a vessel which would offer us most acceptable winter quarters, with every resource possible, and that by a route a third shorter than the other."

"It is the only course we can take," said Bell.

"And I should say," interrupted Johnson, "that we have no time to lose in doing so. We must calculate the length of our journey by the time our provisions will hold out, contrary to what is generally done, and start as soon as possible."

"Quite right, Johnson," said the Doctor; "if we set off to-morrow, Tuesday, the 26th of February, we ought to reach the 'Porpoise' on the 15th of March, if we don't want to die of hunger. What do you say, Hatteras?"

"Let us begin making our preparations at once," said the Captain, "and be off. The route may be a longer one than we think."

"Why so?" replied the Doctor. "This man seems to be sure of his ship's position."

"But suppose the 'Porpoise' has drifted, as the 'Forward' did?"

"True, it might be so."

Johnson and Bell had nothing to say against the possibility of a drift, as they had both been victims to such an event.

But Altamont, who had been listening attentively to this conversation, made the Doctor understand he had something to say. The latter attended to his wishes, and, after a quarter of an hour consumed in circumlocutions, hesitation, and signs, they gained the

assurance that the "Porpoise" had gone ashore on the coast, and could not have got off the rocks where she was lying.

This news made the four Englishmen much easier in their minds, though it deprived them of all hope of returning to Europe, unless Bell could succeed in constructing a smaller vessel out of materials taken from the "Porpoise." However, it was most urgent to find themselves on the spot as soon as possible.

The Doctor asked the American one more question: "Was the sea open at a latitude of 83 degrees?"

"No," replied Altamont. And there the conversation rested. As soon as the preparations for departure were begun, Bell and Johnson took the sledge in hand; it required to be completely repaired. There was no want of wood, and it was strengthened in several parts; they also profited by the experience they had gained in their journey southward, and raised it higher from the ground, as they might reckon on more snow.

Inside, Bell arranged a sort of couch covered with the tent-cloth, intended for the American; the provisions, which were unfortunately but scanty, would not add much weight to the sledge, but then they filled it up with all the wood they could carry away.

The Doctor, when he stowed away the provisions, took a most exact list of them; according to his calculation, every traveller would have a three-quarters ration for a three weeks' journey. One whole ration was set aside for the team of dogs. If "Duke" worked with them he would have his full allowance also.

These preparations were broken off by the want of rest and sleep, which made itself imperiously felt towards seven in the evening; but before lying down the travellers collected once more round the stove, in which fuel had not been spared; the poor fellows allowed themselves a luxury of warmth, to which they had not been accustomed for many a day. Some pemmican, a few biscuits, and several cups of hot coffee were not long in raising their spirits, with hopes which had found them out so soon, and from such a distance.

At seven in the morning their work was resumed, and entirely completed by three in the afternoon.

It was already dark; the sun had reappeared above the horizon since the 31st of January, and it still gave but a short and feeble light. Fortunately the moon would rise at half-past six, and in a clear sky her rays would give sufficient light to the route. The tempera-

ture, which had been falling sensibly for several days, was now 33 deg. below zero.

The time of departure arrived. Altamont was delighted at the idea of the journey, though the jolts of the sledge must increase the pains he endured; he had made the Doctor understand he would find the anti-scorbutics necessary for his use on board the "Porpoise."

He was laid in the sledge as comfortably as possible; the dogs, "Duke" included, were harnessed, and the travellers gave a last look to that bed of ice where the "Forward" had lain. An expression of anger passed across Hatteras's face, but it was only momentary, and the little troop on a dry afternoon plunged into the mists of the north-north-west.

Each man fell into his accustomed place: Bell at the head to show the way; the Doctor and the boatswain by the side of the sledge, giving it a helping hand when necessary; Hatteras in the rear, correcting their course, and keeping the convoy in a line with Bell. Their march was a tolerably quick one; it was so cold that the ice was very favourable to the sledge; the five dogs easily dragged their load along, which did not exceed nine hundred pounds. But both men and animals were soon out of breath, and were often obliged to halt to recover their wind. About seven in the evening the moon's disc rose red above the misty horizon. Her quiet rays penetrated the atmosphere, and gave a certain amount of brilliant light which was reflected by the ice; the ice-field towards the north-west presented a vast white and perfectly level plain, not a hummock visible. This part of the sea seemed to have become frozen as smoothly as a lake.

It was an immense, flat, and monotonous desert.

Such was the impression the view of it made on the Doctor's mind, and he communicated it to his companions.

"Yes! so it is, Mr. Clawbonny—it is a desert indeed; but we need not fear dying of thirst in it."

"An evident advantage, Johnson; still this immensity is to me a proof of one thing—that is, we must be a very great distance from any land; in general, the approach to the coast is indicated by a multitude of icebergs, and not one is now visible around us."

"But the mist limits the horizon so much," replied Johnson.

"So it does; but since we started we have been walking over this dead level field, which seems to have no end to it."

"Are you aware, Mr. Clawbonny, we are treading very dangerous ground? We get accustomed to it, and don't think about it; but the fact is, this frozen surface is covered with bottomless gulfs."

"True, my friend; but we need not fear being swallowed up; the resistance of this white crust in a cold of -33 deg. is considerable. You must observe it tends to increase; for in these latitudes it snows nine days out of ten, even in April, May, and June, and I consider its greatest thickness is not much less than thirty or forty feet."

"That is encouraging, certainly;" answered Johnson.

"We are not like the skaters on the Serpentine, who are afraid of the ice giving way every moment under their feet. Here there is no danger of that sort."

"Is the power of resistance in ice generally known?" asked the old sailor, always ready to profit by the Doctor's conversation.

"Perfectly. There is nothing in the world now which cannot be gauged except human ambition; and is it not that which is now urging us on to the North Pole? But, to return to your question, this is all I can tell you: Ice will bear a man when it is two inches thick; when three inches and a half thick, a horse and his rider may venture on it; at five inches an eight-pounder field-piece; at eight inches a whole battery of artillery; and at ten, an army. Here they might build the Liverpool Custom House, or the Houses of Parliament in London."

"It is difficult to conceive such power of resistance; but just now, Mr. Clawbonny, you were talking about snow falling nine days out of ten in these countries. That is an evident fact, and I do not dispute it; but where does all the snow come from?—for when the seas are frozen, I do not well see how they can supply the immense quantity of vapour which forms the clouds."

"Yours is a very just observation, Johnson; and in my opinion, the greater part of the snow and rain which we find in these Polar regions proceeds from the water of the seas in the temperate zones; a flake of snow may be a drop of water from some European river, carried off from thence in the form of vapour, and has arrived in a condensed form here; the snow we drink to quench our thirst may possibly proceed from the rivers in our own country."

At that moment they heard Hatteras's voice correcting the route, which interrupted their conversation. The mist was getting thicker, and made it the more difficult to keep the right direction.

At last the troop halted about eight in the evening, having marched about fifteen miles; the weather remained dry—the tent was set up—fire lighted; they supped and passed a quiet night. The 5th of March afforded a sight of a phenomenon peculiar to those latitudes. The sky was perfectly clear, and the stars shone brightly; a thick fall of snow came on without any appearance of clouds; the constellations were quite visible through the snow, which lasted for about two hours, without the Doctor being able to give a satisfactory explanation for its fall.

The last quarter of the moon had waned; profound darkness took her place for seventeen hours out of the twenty-four. The travellers tied themselves together by means of a long cord, that they might not part company, it being almost impossible to keep in a straight line together.

However, though kept up by an iron will, these brave men began to feel the effects of fatigue; their halts became more frequent, and nevertheless, they had not an hour to lose, for their provisions were visibly diminishing.

Hatteras often ascertained their position by lunar and stellar observations. As he saw day after day go by, and the object of the journey at an indefinite distance from them, he began at last to question in his own mind the existence of the "Porpoise"; whether the American's brain had not been weakened by his sufferings, or whether, through hatred of the English, and seeing himself lost beyond redemption, he wished to drag them with himself down to certain death.

He communicated his suppositions to the Doctor; but the latter refused to entertain them for a moment, though he saw that an unfortunate rivalry existed between the English and the American Captains.

"It will be a difficult matter for these two men to keep on good terms with one another," said he to himself. The 14th of March, after sixteen days' journeying, the travellers only found themselves in latitude 82 deg.; their strength was gone, and they were still a hundred miles from the ship. They were obliged to put the men on quarter-rations, to be able to give the dogs their full share.

Unfortunately, they could not calculate on the resources arising from the chase; for they had only seven charges of powder left and

half-a-dozen bullets. They had had shots at a few white hares and foxes, but had not brought one to bag.

However, on Friday, the 15th, the Doctor was lucky enough to surprise a seal asleep on the ice; he fired several balls into it, and the animal not being able to escape, as its hole was stopped, was caught and knocked on the head. It was a very fine one. Johnson cut it up very skilfully, but its extreme leanness did not offer much nourishment to men who could not persuade themselves to drink its oil in the Esquimaux fashion.

The Doctor made a bold attempt to swallow it, but could not succeed. He kept the animal's skin, however, and put it in the sledge.

The next day, the 16th, they saw some icebergs and small ice-hills on the horizon. Did they indicate the approach to the coast, or only some irregularity in the ice-field? It was difficult to decide.

Having reached one of these hummocks, the travellers profited by it to dig out a more comfortable retreat than the tent, with the aid of a snow-knife, and after three hours' hard work they were able to stretch themselves all round the lighted stove.





CHAPTER IV.

THE LAST CHARGE OF POWDER.

JOHNSON had taken the tired dogs into the ice house ; when there was plenty of snow it served them as a covering, for it preserved their natural heat ; but in the open air, in this dry cold, 40 deg. below zero, the poor beasts would have been frozen in a very short time.

Johnson, who was an excellent dog-driver, tried to feed his team on that dusky-looking seal's flesh which the travellers' stomachs refused ; and, to his great surprise, they ate it eagerly. The old sailor was quite delighted, and told the Doctor of it, who was not at all surprised ; he knew that in North America horses are principally fed upon fish, and what a herbivorous animal like a horse would eat, an omnivorous beast like a dog could easily content himself with.

Before going to sleep, though rest was an imperative necessity for men who had dragged themselves for fifteen miles across the ice during the day, the Doctor wished to discuss their actual situation with his companions, without dissembling its gravity.

"We are not yet at the eighty-second parallel," said he, "and our provisions begin to fail us already."

"The greater reason for not losing a moment !" cried Hatteras "We must go on ; the stronger must help the weaker."

"Are we sure to find a vessel when we get there ?" said Bell, whom the fatigue of the route had quite broken down.

"Why doubt it ?" replied Johnson ; "the American's safety depends upon ours."

The Doctor, for greater certainty, again questioned Altamont. The latter spoke more easily, but still feebly ; he confirmed all the

preceding details, and repeated that the ship, fast on some granite rocks, could not move, and that it would be found in longitude 120 deg. 15 min. and latitude 83 deg. 35 min.

"We cannot doubt what he tells us," said the Doctor. "The difficulty is, not to find the 'Porpoise,' but to get there."

"What provisions have we left?" asked Hatteras.

"Enough for three days at most," replied the Doctor.

"Then we must get there in three days," said the Captain, energetically.

"We must indeed, and if we succeed we shall have no reason to complain, for we shall have been favoured by exceptionally fine weather. The snow has given us a respite of fifteen days, and the sledge has travelled well over the ice. If it only had a couple of hundred pounds weight of provisions, our good dogs could easily have dragged it with them. Well, as it is quite another thing, we cannot help it."

"With a little chance and some skill, could we not utilize the few charges of powder left? If we could only shoot a bear we should have food enough for the rest of the journey."

"So we should, but these animals are shy and scarce; and then for the shot to be effectual, neither hand nor eye must fail."

"You are a good shot, Doctor," said Bell.

"Yes, when four men's dinner does not depend upon my hitting or missing; still if I can get a chance I will do my best. In the mean time, my friends, we must be satisfied with a slender supper of pemmican crumbs. Let us try to sleep, and next morning we will set off again."

On Saturday morning early, Johnson roused his companions; the dogs were harnessed to the sledge, and the caravan was again in motion towards the north.

The sky was magnificent, the atmosphere extremely pure, the temperature very low. When the sun appeared above the horizon it had the appearance of an elongated ellipse; its horizontal diameter, in consequence of the refraction, seemed double its vertical diameter; its clear but cold rays spread across the immense frozen plain. This return to light, if not to warmth, was a source of pleasure to the travellers.

The Doctor, gun in hand, kept a mile or two away from the others, braving cold and solitude; before leaving he had found all

the ammunition left was four charges of powder and three bullets.

That was little enough, when it is remembered that a Polar bear seldom falls to less than ten or a dozen balls.

But the brave Doctor's ambition did not prompt him to seek such terrible game; a few hares or two or three foxes would have answered his purpose and produced a sufficient supply.

The whole day, if he saw one of the animals, he was either unable to get near it, or, deceived by the refraction, he wasted his shot. This day cost him one charge of powder and one ball wasted.

His companions, who had trembled with hope when they heard the discharge of his gun, saw him return hanging his head.

They said nothing, but lay down as usual, after laying aside the two quarter-rations reserved for the two following days.

The next day the route became more difficult. They could not walk—they dragged themselves along; the dogs had devoured all that was left of the seal, and they began to gnaw their harness.

Some foxes passed not far from the sledge, but the Doctor would not waste his last charges of powder and his last ball on them.

That evening they halted earlier; the travellers could not put one foot before the other, and though their route was lighted up by a magnificent aurora borealis, they were obliged to halt.

This last Sunday-evening meal, under their frozen tent, was a sad one. If Heaven did not come to their assistance these unfortunate men were lost.

Hatteras said nothing, Bell was thinking of nothing, Johnson was lost in silent reflection, yet the Doctor would not despair.

Johnson's idea was to set a trap or two in the night, but having no bait to put in them, he could not expect much result from this plan; and he was right, for the next morning he found plenty of fox tracks, but not one of these animals in the trap.

He returned very much disappointed, when he saw a very large bear scenting the sledge about three hundred yards distant. The old seaman believed Providence had sent him this animal so unexpectedly that he might kill him. Without awakening his companions, he seized the Doctor's gun, and went after the bear.

When within distance he took good aim; but, finding his gloves encumbering his hands, he took them off, and grasped his gun with

greater confidence ; but, with a sudden cry of pain, he let the gun fall, which went off, from the shock. The skin of his hands was caught by the cold of the barrel, and remained adhering to it.

The Doctor ran up, on hearing the report ; he soon saw what had happened. He could see the animal quietly walking off. Johnson was in despair.

"I must be turning an old woman," cried he, "or a child, not to be able to stand pain better than that, at my age."

"Come," said the Doctor, "you will have your hands frost-bitten. Look ; they are getting white already. Come back at once."

"I don't deserve your attention, Mr. Clawbonny. Let me alone."

"Come at once, you obstinate old fool," cried the Doctor, impatiently, "or it will be too late."

The Doctor dragged him into the tent, and put both his hands into the kettle of water, which the warmth of the stove kept in a liquid state, though cool. Johnson's hands were hardly plunged into it before the surface of the water froze immediately.

"See there," cried the Doctor ; "it was time you came back, or I should have been obliged to have recourse to amputation. Now, keep your hands away from the stove, or its warmth may make them worse than they were before."

That morning they were obliged to dispense with breakfast : nothing was left, either of pemmican or salt meat ; not a crumb of biscuit, and hardly half-a-pound of coffee. They were forced to be satisfied with the latter, boiling hot ; and then, again, they set forth on their route.

"It is nearly all over now," said Bell to Johnson, in a tone of hopeless despair.

"Trust in God," returned the old sailor ; "He can save us, if He will."

"This Captain Hatteras," said Bell, "the madman, has got back from his first expedition, but he will never return from this one, and we shall never see our own country again !"

"Courage, Bell—courage. I allow, the Captain is rash ; but yet here is a man full of resources at his elbow."

"You mean Doctor Clawbonny," said Bell.

"That's the man," replied Johnson.

"But what can he do for us now ?" said Bell, shrugging his

shoulders. "Can he turn these lumps of ice into meat? Is he a god, to perform miracles?"

"Who knows?" replied the boatswain, in answer to his companion's doubts. "I still believe in him."

Bell shook his head, and dropped into a state of torpor which saved him the trouble of thinking.

They advanced hardly three miles that day; in the evening they had nothing to eat. The dogs were nearly devouring each other. The men experienced the pangs of hunger in a most violent degree. They did not see a single animal; and it would have been useless if they had, for they had only knives to use. But Johnson thought he saw the same bear again following the caravan, about a mile to leeward of them.

"He is watching us," thought he. "He sees he is sure of us."

But he said nothing about it to his companions. In the evening they halted, and their only supper was coffee. The poor wretches felt their eyes become haggard, their brain affected; and, tortured by hunger, they could not get an hour's rest. Horribly painful dreams broke their sleep. In a latitude where the body requires a most invigorating diet, these poor fellows had not eaten for thirty-six hours.

When Tuesday morning came—still animated by almost superhuman courage and perseverance—they again started, pushing the sledge along, which the dogs were unable to draw.

After walking for a couple of hours they fell down exhausted. Hatteras wanted to go on, and he used his best efforts. He prayed and entreated them to rise; but it was asking an impossibility. So, with Johnson's help, he cut a hole in an iceberg; and these two men seemed to be hollowing out a tomb for them all.

"I can die of hunger, if I must," said Hatteras, "but not of cold."

After hard work, the house was ready, and they all ensconced themselves within it.

So the day passed. In the evening, while his companions were lying without moving, Johnson dreamed about an enormous bear.

He repeated the word "bear" so often, that the Doctor, roused from his lethargy, asked him what bear he was talking about?

"That bear that is following us," replied Johnson.

"What bear is following us?"

"Yes he is; he has followed us for the last two days."

"For the last two days!—have you seen him?"

"Yes, he is down there, a mile to leeward of us."

"Why didn't you tell me about him before, Johnson?"

"What was the use of it?"

"Very true; we have not a single bullet left."

"Nor a slug, nor a bit of iron, nor even a nail," added Johnson.

The Doctor was silent for a moment; then said he to the boatswain:—

"Are you quite sure this animal is after us?"

"Certain, Mr. Clawbonny. He reckons on feeding on us. We can never escape him."

"Calm yourself, Johnson," said the Doctor.

"No, Mr. Clawbonny; since that is to be our fate, we ought not to prolong the animal's sufferings. He is as hungry as we are. There are no seals for him, but Providence sends him men. So much the better for him."

Johnson was becoming delirious. He wanted to leave the ice house. The Doctor could only calm him by saying, in a tone of conviction:—

"I shall kill that bear to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" said Johnson, who seemed to be suffering from nightmare.

"Yes; to-morrow."

"But you have no bullet."

"I shall make one."

"Without lead?"

"I have mercury." So saying, the Doctor took the thermometer. It showed 50 deg. above zero in the house. He took it outside, laid it on a block of ice, and went in again. The temperature outside was 50 deg. below zero.

"Go to sleep, and wait till to-morrow," said he to Johnson.

The next morning, with the first rays of light, the Doctor, followed by Johnson, hurried outside, and ran to the thermometer. All the mercury was down in the ball, and frozen hard. The Doctor broke the instrument, and, having prudently put on his gloves, took up a morsel of tolerably hard metal. It was a real slug.

"Ah! Mr. Clawbonny," cried the boatswain; "that is something wonderful. You are a fine fellow!"

"Not at all, my good friend. But I have read a great deal, and I have a good memory—that's all."

"What do you mean?"

"I recollected a circumstance related by Captain Ross: he said he had pierced a plank an inch thick with a ball of frozen mercury; and that a ball of frozen almond-oil, fired against a post, split it, and fell back on the ground without being broken."

"That seems incredible."

"But it is true, nevertheless, Johnson; and this bit of metal will save all our lives. Leave it outside till we want it, and let us look and see if the bear has been following us."

Just then Hatteras came out of the hut. The Doctor showed him his slug, and told him his plan. The Captain squeezed his hand; and then they all three began watching the horizon.

The sky was clear; and Hatteras, who was ahead of his companions, made out the bear about a mile and a half distant.

The animal was seated on his rump, and quietly nodding his head, as he scented his unusual guests.

"There he is," said the Captain.

"Silence!" said the Doctor.

When the enormous brute saw the men, he never stirred. He looked at them without betraying either fear or anger. But it was evidently a difficult matter to get near him.

"My friends," said Hatteras, "recollect this is not a mere matter of sport; our existence is at stake. Let us be prudent."

"Yes, indeed," replied Clawbonny, "for we have only one single shot left. We must not miss him. If he runs, he is lost to us; for he is as fast as a greyhound."

"We must go right up to him," said Johnson. "We risk our lives; but what does that matter? I want to risk mine!"

"It is my turn!" cried the Doctor.

"No; mine," said Hatteras, quietly.

"But," said Johnson, "your life is of more consequence to the whole of us than that of an old fellow like me."

"No, Johnson," returned the Captain. "I don't intend to risk my life more than necessary. Possibly, too, I may want your assistance."

"Hatteras," cried the Doctor, "do you mean to go and face that bear?"

"If I was sure of bringing him down, I would risk it, if he were to split my skull with a blow of his paw; but, at my approach, he might move off. It is a very cunning beast, and we must be as cunning."

"What do you think of doing?"

"Get within ten paces of him without his suspecting my presence."

"How can you do that?"

"By a very simple means, though a dangerous one. Didn't you keep the skin of the seal you shot?"

"Yes; it's in the sledge."

"Let us go back to the hut while Johnson keeps a look-out."

The boatswain slipped behind a hummock, which kept him entirely out of sight of the bear—which, sniffing the air from the travellers' resting-place, continued balancing himself backwards and forwards, without change of position.





CHAPTER V.

THE SEAL AND THE BEAR.

HATTERAS and the Doctor returned to the hut.

"You are aware," said the first, "that the Polar bear lives principally on seals' flesh. They watch for them at the sides of the cracks in the ice for days together, and smother them in their hug the moment they appear above the surface. A bear, therefore, would not take fright at the appearance of a seal—on the contrary."

"I understand your plan," said the Doctor, "but it is a dangerous one."

"Still, it offers some chance of success," replied the Captain, "so we must make use of it. I intend to put this sealskin over me and slip up tolerably near him. There is no time to be lost, so load your gun and give it to me."

The Doctor had no objection to make. He would have done himself what his companion was going to attempt. He left the hut, taking two axes with him, one for Johnson, the other for himself; accompanied by Johnson, they turned their steps towards the sledge, where Hatteras enveloped himself in the sealskin, which covered him entirely.

In the mean time the Doctor loaded his gun with his last charge of powder and the ball of mercury, which was as hard as iron and as heavy as lead; then he handed it to Hatteras, who hid it away under the sealskin.

"Now go," said he, "and join Johnson; I shall wait here a few moments to put the bear off his guard."

"Courage, Hatteras!" said the Doctor.

"Be easy, and above all don't show yourselves until after I have fired."

The Doctor soon ensconced himself behind the hummock, where Johnson was hiding.

"Well?" said he.

"Well, we must wait! Hatteras is risking his life for us all."

The Doctor was very anxious. He looked at the bear, which was betraying evident signs of excitement, as if he was conscious of some impending danger.

In about a quarter of an hour the seal began crawling along the ice; he had gone some way round, under cover of several blocks of ice, the better to deceive the bear; he was then about a hundred yards from him. The latter saw him, and very cautiously turned towards him, while the seal seemed to be looking for a crack into which he could plunge.

The bear's inflamed eyes showed his eagerness; for a month, or perhaps two, he had been short of food, and now chance threw his prey in his way.

The seal soon was not more than ten paces from his enemy; the latter made a spring, and stopped in stupid astonishment; while Hatteras, throwing off the skin, with one knee on the ground, aimed at the bear's head.

The gun was fired, and the bear rolled over on the ice.

"Forward!" cried the Doctor, and, followed by Johnson, he rushed up to the scene of the conflict.

The bear was sitting upon his haunches, striking the air with one paw, while he was trying to stop the bullet-hole with the snow he snatched up with the other.

Hatteras was waiting for him with his knife in his hand. But he had taken good aim, and hit him in the right place with a hand that did not tremble; before his companions could come up he had plunged his knife into the animal's throat, which fell never to rise again.

"Victory!" cried Johnson.

"Hurrah! Hatteras—hurrah!" called out the Doctor.

Hatteras coolly looked at the bear, as he stood there with folded arms.

"It is my turn now," said Johnson; "it is all very well shooting the game, but we must not wait till the cold makes it as hard as a stone; for neither teeth nor knives would be any use then."

Johnson then set to work to skin this enormous beast, which was



The bear was sitting upon its haunches striking the air with its paws.

nearly as large as an ox. It was about nine feet long, and six feet in girth ; its canine teeth were three inches long.

Johnson cut him open, and found only water in the stomach. The bear had evidently been without food for some time ; he was, nevertheless, very fat, and weighed more than fifteen hundred pounds. They cut him up into quarters, each of which gave two hundred pounds of meat, and the hunters dragged all this flesh to their ice hut, not forgetting the heart, which was beating three hours afterwards.

The Doctor's companions would willingly have eaten this meat raw, but the latter restrained them, and asked for time to broil some of it.

When Clawbonny entered the hut he was surprised to find it so cold. He touched the stove and found it completely extinguished ; the morning's business had caused Johnson, whose duty it was to attend to it, to forget it entirely.

The Doctor tried to light the fire again ; but was unable to do so, not a spark remaining alight.

"Patience ! Patience !" he ejaculated. He went to the sledge to get some tinder, and asked Johnson for his tinder-box. "The fire in the stove has gone out," said he.

"It is my fault," replied Johnson, and he felt for the tinder-box, which he usually carried about in his pocket, and was surprised not to find it there.

He felt in all his other pockets with no more success ; he returned to the ice hut and searched the blankets in which he had passed the night, with no more luck.

"Well ?" the Doctor called out.

Johnson came back and looked at his companions.

"Haven't you got the tinder-box, Mr. Clawbonny ?" said he.

"No, Johnson."

"Nor you, Captain ?"

"No," replied Hatteras.

"It has always been in your charge," said the Doctor.

"I can't find it," said Johnson, growing pale.

"You can't ?" said the Doctor, who could not help trembling.

It was the only one they had, and the consequence of losing it would be terrible.

"Look again, Johnson," said the Doctor.

The latter hurried to the hummock behind which they had been watching the bear, and then to the place where he had skinned him, but it was not there. He came back in a state of despair.

Hatteras looked at him without uttering one word of reproach.

"This is a bad job," said he to the Doctor.

"Very," replied the latter.

"We have not even an instrument, the glass of which would attract the sun's rays sufficiently to set fire to the tinder, so we must appease our hunger with raw meat; then we will start again for the ship."

"Yes," said the Doctor, who was deep in thought; "yes, it is just possible. Why not? We can but try."

"What are you thinking about?" asked Hatteras

"An idea has just come into my head."

"An idea?" cried Johnson. "Then we are saved."

"The question is, whether it will succeed," said the Doctor.

"What is your plan?" asked Hatteras.

"We have not a lens, so we must make one."

"How?" asked Johnson.

"With a piece of ice, which we must cut into shape. All we want is to attract the rays of the sun to one centre, and ice may serve us as well as crystal. Only I should prefer fresh-water ice to salt, as it is both harder and more transparent."

"If I am not wrong," said Johnson, pointing to a hummock about a hundred yards off, "that black and green-looking lump there —"

"Quite right, Johnson; bring your axe and come with me."

The three went to the block, which really was of fresh-water ice.

The Doctor broke off a piece about a foot in diameter, cut it into shape with the axe, and then worked the surface with his knife, and polished it with his hand; by so doing he obtained a glass as transparent as if it had been made of the purest crystal.

He then returned to the ice hut, took a piece of amadou, and began his experiment.

The sun was then shining brightly; and the Doctor submitted his lens to the rays, which he concentrated on the tinder, which caught fire in a few seconds.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" cried Johnson, who could not believe his eyes.

The old sailor could not contain himself for joy, while the Doctor went inside. In a few minutes a fire was lighted in the stove, and the savoury smell of a grill aroused Bell from his torpor.

One can guess what a feast it was. The Doctor, however, counselled his friends to be moderate, set them an example himself, and talked to them as he ate.

"This has been a fortunate day for us; we are now sure of provisions for the rest of our journey. But we must not stay in this Capua of delight, but set off again as soon as possible."

"We cannot be more than forty-eight hours' journey from the 'Porpoise,'" said Altamont, whose speech was almost entirely restored.

"I hope," said the Doctor, laughing, "we shall find means there of lighting a fire."

"Yes," replied the American.

"For though my lens is a good one, it is not of much use the days there is no sun, and those days are not seldom at less than four degrees from the Pole."

"True," replied Altamont, with a sigh; "at less than four degrees. My ship has been where no vessel ever ventured before."

"Come—we must get on," said Hatteras, shortly.

"Come," repeated the Doctor, casting an uneasy look at the two captains.

The travellers had soon recovered their strength; the dogs had been well fed on the bear's spoils, and they set off rapidly northward.

As they went along the Doctor tried to learn from Altamont what had brought him so far north, but the American only gave him evasive answers.

"Two men to look after," said the Doctor, aside, to Johnson.

"Yes," replied Johnson.

"Hatteras never speaks to the American, and the latter does not seem overburdened with gratitude. It is fortunate I am here."

"Mr. Clawbonny," replied Johnson, "if I am not very much mistaken, this Yankee suspects what the Captain's projects are. Will he ever come round again? I don't much like his looks. Do you think his plans are the same as ours?"

"Who knows, Johnson? The Americans are bold and enter-

prising. What an Englishman would try to do, an American could very well attempt also."

"You think, then, that Altamont——?"

"I don't think at all," replied the Doctor; "but the position of his vessel so near the Pole makes one reflect."

"But Altamont told us that he had drifted there against his will."

"So he did; but I thought I noticed a strange sort of smile on his face as he said it."

"The devil! Mr. Clawbonny. A rivalry between two men of that stamp would be a very unfortunate circumstance."

"I hope to Heaven I am wrong, Johnson; for such a situation might bring very serious difficulties in its train, if not something worse!"

"I trust Altamont will never forget we saved his life!"

"But he is going to save ours now. I confess, had it not been for us he would not be alive at this moment; but without him and his ship, what would become of us?"

"Well, Mr. Clawbonny, you are here, and I hope, with your help, things will turn out well."

"I hope so, too, Johnson."

They pursued their journey with no further incident; bear's meat was not wanting, and they made copious meals on it. A certain amount of good-humour prevailed among them, thanks to the Doctor's amiable philosophy. This worthy man had always something to say worth hearing about facts and things. His health continued good; he had not grown much thinner, notwithstanding his fatigue and privations; his Liverpool friends would have had no difficulty in recognizing him, particularly from his good and even temper.

During Saturday a great modification took place in the nature of the immense plain of ice; more frequent packs, hummocks heaped on one another, all showed the ice-field was under the influence of great pressure. It was evident some unknown continent, or some new island, by narrowing the passes, had produced this confusion. Blocks of fresh-water ice, in more considerable numbers, and of greater size, indicated the propinquity of some coast.

There must exist, therefore, at little distance from them, some new land; and the Doctor was burning with the desire of enriching the

maps of the northern hemisphere. The Doctor's delight was to sit down and trace unknown coasts with his pencil on the map, while that of Hatteras would be to put his foot down on the Pole itself; and he was enjoying, by anticipation, the satisfaction of baptizing seas, straits, bays, and the various windings of this new continent. In this grand nomenclature, he omitted neither his companions, his friends, nor her Gracious Majesty, nor the Royal Family, nor himself either, and he could see in his mind's eye a certain Cape Clawbonny with legitimate satisfaction.

These thoughts occupied his mind the whole of the journey. They encamped for the night as usual, and each man kept watch in turn during a night passed so near an unknown shore.

The next day, Sunday, after a good breakfast on bear's paws, which were excellent, the travellers kept on their northward course, bending a little to the west; the route became more difficult, but they moved rapidly on, notwithstanding.

Altamont, from the top of the sledge, feverishly kept a sharp look out; his companions were also a prey to involuntary uneasiness. The last solar observation had given them an exact latitude of 83 deg. 35 min., and longitude 120 deg. 15 min.; this was the position assigned to the American ship; the question of life and death would thus be solved in the course of the day.

At last, about two in the afternoon, Altamont stood bolt upright, stopped the troop by calling out, as he pointed with his finger to a mass of white, which the eye of anyone else would have confounded with the surrounding icebergs, "The 'Porpoise!'"





CHAPTER VI.

THE "PORPOISE."

THE 24th of March was Palm Sunday, on which day the streets of towns and villages in Europe are strewn with flowers and leaves; bells are ringing, and the atmosphere is redolent of perfumes.

But in this desolate region, how sad and silent it is!—a dry cutting wind, not even a leaf or a dry blade of grass! For all that, this Sunday was a day of rejoicing for the travellers, for they were about to find resources, the privation of which had condemned them to impending death.

So they hurried onward; the dogs drew their load more gallantly, "Duke" barked with satisfaction, and the party soon reached the American ship.

The "Porpoise" was entirely buried in the snow; it had neither masts, nor yards, nor rigging left standing; it had all been carried away at the time she was wrecked. She was completely imbedded in rocks which had been quite unseen by the crew. The "Porpoise," lying on her broadside, with a large hole in her bottom, seemed uninhabitable.

The Captain, the Doctor, and Johnson soon made that discovery the moment they went on board—they had to clear away fifteen feet of ice before they could get to the main hatchway; but, to their great delight, they saw that the wild animals, of which there were abundant traces round the ship, had been unable to get at the provisions.

"There may be enough of fuel and food here," said Johnson; "but the hull does not seem much of a place to live in."

"Then we must build a snow house," said Hatteras; "and establish ourselves as well as we can on land."

"No doubt we can," observed the Doctor; "but there is no hurry, and let us do things properly. Anyhow, we can put up in the ship for a time, while we are building a good strong house, capable of protecting ourselves both against cold and wild beasts. I will undertake to be architect, and you will soon see me at work."

"I don't doubt your ability, Mr. Clawbonny," replied Johnson; "we had better establish ourselves here as well as we can, and take an inventory of what there is in the ship; unfortunately, I don't see a single boat, and this wreckage is in too bad a state to admit of our building one."

"Who knows?" said the Doctor; "with time and reflection a great deal may be done; now it is not a question of going to sea, but of establishing ourselves here; and I suggest we should only think of doing one thing at a time."

"That is the wisest conclusion to arrive at," replied Hatteras; "let us begin with what is most important."

The three companions quitted the ship, returned to the sledge and told Bell and the American the conclusion they had come to. Bell declared he was quite ready to set to work; the American shook his head when he heard that nothing could be done with his ship; but as all discussion just then was evidently superfluous, they adopted the plan of taking refuge on board the "Porpoise" while they built themselves a habitation on shore.

By four in the evening the travellers were settled as well as they could be under the orlop deck. Bell had, by means of spare pieces of timber, constructed a floor which was nearly horizontal: the bedding, which was frozen as hard as a stone, but which was soon thawed by the heat of the stove, was laid upon it. Altamont, with the Doctor's help, was able, with some little difficulty, to crawl into the corner which had been kept for him. As he set foot on board his vessel he gave a sort of sigh of satisfaction, which, in the boatswain's opinion, did not augur well.

"He feels at home," said the old sailor to himself; "he will be thinking we are here at his invitation."

The rest of the day they spent in repose. The weather threatened change. Under the influence of the westerly wind the thermometer inside marked 26 deg. The "Porpoise" was really lying beyond the frozen Pole, and in a latitude relatively less cold, though nearer the north.

That day they finished the remains of the bear, with some biscuits found in the bread-room, and some cups of tea; then fatigue took possession of them, and every man went fast asleep.

The next morning Hatteras and his companions rose late. Their ideas had fallen into a fresh groove: they were no longer preoccupied by the uncertainty of what the morrow might bring; their only care was to establish themselves comfortably. They looked on themselves as emigrants arrived at their destination, and, forgetting the sufferings of the voyage, they only thought about providing for an endurable future.

"Ouf!" cried the Doctor, stretching himself; "it is a great thing not to have to ask oneself where one is to sleep to-night, and where one is to find anything to eat to-morrow morning."

"We had better begin by taking an inventory of the ship's stores," replied Johnson.

The "Porpoise" had been fitted out and provisioned for a long voyage.

The inventory gave the following account of provisions: six thousand five hundred pounds of flour, suet and raisins for puddings; two thousand pounds of salt beef and pork; fifteen hundred pounds of pemmican; seven hundred pounds of sugar, the same quantity of chocolate, a chest and a half of tea weighing ninety-six pounds; five hundred pounds of rice; several casks of preserved fruit and vegetables; abundance of lime-juice; seeds of scurvy-grass, sorrel, and cress; three hundred gallons of rum and brandy;—the magazine contained a great quantity of powder, lead, and balls;—coal and wood in abundance; while the Doctor took especial charge of the various instruments, and also of a powerful Bunzen battery which had been brought with the intention of making experiments in electricity.

Altogether, there were supplies sufficient to keep five men on full rations for two years. Thus, all fear of dying from hunger passed from their minds.

"Our existence is now assured," said the Doctor to the Captain; "and there is nothing to prevent our reaching the Pole now."

"Reaching the Pole!" said Hatteras, starting.

"Certainly, in the summer months, what is to prevent our making a land expedition?"

"Over land, yes; but over sea, how?"

"By building a boat from the materials of the 'Porpoise.'"

"Ah! yes!—an American boat, to be commanded by that American," replied Hatteras, disdainfully.

The Doctor fully understood the Captain's repugnance, and did not press the question—so he changed the topic of conversation.

"Now we know what we have to rely upon as far as food is concerned," he resumed, "we must build a store for them and a dwelling-place for ourselves. There is no want of material, and we can establish ourselves here very comfortably. Bell, my friend, I hope you intend to distinguish yourself; I shall be able to give you a little advice on the subject."

"I am quite ready, Mr. Clawbonny; with these blocks of ice lying about, I could almost build a whole town with streets——"

"We don't require so much as that; we must follow the example of the Hudson's Bay Company's traders. They construct forts which protect them from the Indians and wild animals—that is all we want. We must entrench ourselves as well as we can; on one side our own dwelling, on the other the magazines, with a curtain and two bastions to defend us. I will try to recall what I once knew of castrametation."

"I have no doubt, Mr. Clawbonny, we shall be very successful under your direction."

"Well, my friends, we must first choose our position. A good engineer ought always to reconnoitre the ground first. Will you come, Hatteras?"

"I will leave it to you," said the Captain; "and go and take a look along the shore."

Altamont was too weak to take part in the work, so they left him on board the ship, and landed on the continent.

The weather was thick and stormy; at midnight the thermometer stood at 11 deg. below zero, but as there was no wind the temperature was bearable.

To judge from the line of coast, a very considerable sea, then entirely frozen, extended westward as far as one could see. Eastward it was bounded by a bend of the coast, intersected by deep estuaries, and rising abruptly two hundred yards from the beach; it thus formed a wide bay studded with those dangerous rocks on which the "Porpoise" had been wrecked. At some distance inland there rose a mountain, the height of which the Doctor calculated at

five hundred feet. Northward a promontory ran into the sea, after having covered part of the bay. An island—or more properly speaking, an islet—rose from an ice-field about three miles from the coast, so that, were it not for the difficulty in getting into the roadstead, safe and sheltered anchorage was to be found there. There was a hollow sort of basin along the coast which would have made a very accessible little harbour for vessels if this part of the Arctic Ocean was ever free from ice ; and according to Belcher and Penny, the whole sea ought to be open during the summer months. Half-way up the hill the Doctor noticed a plateau about two hundred feet in diameter, three of its sides overlooking the bay ; the fourth was closed by a perpendicular wall a hundred and twenty feet high ; it could only be reached by cutting steps in the ice. This spot seemed just adapted for constructing a really solid building upon ; it could easily be defended, for nature had taken the first steps in that direction, and all they had to do was to profit by it.

The Doctor, Bell, and Johnson got on the platform by cutting steps in the ice ; they found it perfectly level. The Doctor being satisfied with the situation, they determined to clear it of the ten feet of hard snow which covered it ; for a solid foundation to both house and magazine was absolutely necessary.

They worked with little cessation the whole of Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, till they came to the soil itself. It was very hard granite, and the pick brought garnets and feldspar crystals to light.

The Doctor then gave the dimensions of the snow house, and its plan : it was forty feet long by twenty feet wide, and ten feet high : it was divided into three parts—a day-room, a bed-room, and a kitchen. They required no more. The kitchen was on the left, and the bed-room on the right of the day-room. They worked hard for five days. There was no want of materials ; the walls were of sufficient thickness to resist a thaw, for even in the summer they would require shelter. The house made a very respectable appearance as it advanced. It had four windows in front, and was glazed with slabs of ice, in Esquimaux fashion, which let a soft light through, like that of ground glass. In front of the parlour, or day-room, a long corridor, like a covered way, ran between the two windows, which gave access to the house ; a door taken from the cabin of the “ Porpoise ” closed it hermetically. When it was

finished the Doctor was enchanted with his work. They then proceeded with the interior arrangements. They conveyed the bedding in the "Porpoise" to the bedroom, and arranged it in a circle round the stove. Benches, chairs, arm-chairs, tables, and cupboards were brought to the parlour, which was also the dining-room; and the kitchen was supplied with the cooking-stoves and other utensils from the galley of the "Porpoise." Sails, laid on the ground, did duty for carpets, and also for doors between the different apartments, which had no other means of closing.

The walls of the house were about five feet thick, throughout, and the bays of the windows resembled embrasures for cannon. All this was extremely solid, and what could they want more? If they had listened to the Doctor, what would he not have done with snow and ice, which lend themselves so easily to all sorts of combinations? He had once read M. Kraft's description of the ice house, built at St. Petersburg, in January, 1740, and of all it contained. One evening he described the wonders of this ice palace to his companions.

"What they did at St. Petersburg," said he, "why can't we do it here? What do we want? Nothing; not even imagination!"

"Then it was very fine?" said Johnson.

"It was quite fairy-like. The house was built by order of the Empress Anne, and it was there she celebrated the wedding of one of her jesters, in 1740. It was about as large as ours; but along the terrace in front were six cannons of ice on their carriages, which were loaded several times with powder and ball, and discharged without bursting; there were also mortars carrying sixty-pound bombshells; so, if necessary, we can have quite a park of artillery, the material for which is not far, and it falls from the sky. But the front of the palace was a triumph of taste and art—it was decorated with statues in ice of the greatest beauty. The steps leading up to it displayed vases of flowers and orange-trees, all made of the same material; on the right stood an enormous elephant, discharging water from his trunk all day, and burning naphtha during the night. We could have a complete menagerie if we liked here."

"As for animals," replied Johnson, "there will be no want of them, and not the less interesting that they are not made of ice."

"Well," replied the Doctor, boldly, "we shall know how to defend ourselves. But, to return to my house at St. Petersburg, I must tell

you that inside there were tables, looking-glasses, candelabra, beds, mattresses, pillows, curtains, clocks, chairs, cards, sideboards, with a complete service of plate, everything in ice, carved, chased, engine-turned, in fact, nothing was wanting."

"It was, then, quite a palace," observed Bell.

"A splendid palace, worthy of a sovereign. Ah! see how well Providence has done to invent it, since it contributes so much to the comfort of the shipwrecked mariner."

Moving into the snow house occupied them until the 31st of March; it was Easter Sunday, and that day was devoted to rest; they passed it in the parlour, where divine service was read, and everyone was able to appreciate the good arrangement of the snow house.

The next day they began building the storehouses and powder-magazine, which occupied them a week, including the time consumed in unloading the "*Porpoise*," which was not accomplished without difficulty, for the extremely low temperature would not allow them to work at it long. At last, on the 8th of April, provisions, fuel, and ammunition were completely under cover on dry land; the storehouses were placed on the north, and the powder-magazine on the south side of the terrace, about sixty feet distant from either end of the house; a kennel was also built near the stores, for the Greenland dog team, which the Doctor called the "*Dog Palace*." "*Duke*" lived in the house.

Then the Doctor proceeded to the defensive works of the place. Under his direction the terrace was surrounded by regular ice-works which protected it entirely from invasion; its height was a natural scarp, and as it had neither re-entering nor salient angles, it was equally strong on all its faces. While organizing this system of defence the Doctor wonderfully resembled *Sterne's Uncle Toby*, whose good and even temper he also possessed. It was a pleasure to see him calculating the angle of the inside slope, and other arrangements, which were so easily executed in snow that the work was a pleasure, and the amiable engineer was able to make his outside wall seven feet thick. These works were completed about the 15th of April. The Fort was quite finished, and the Doctor was very proud of his performance.

This fortification would have really held out for a long time against a tribe of *Esquimaux*, if such enemies had ever been met with; but

there were no traces whatever of human beings on the coast. Hatteras, in surveying the Bay, never once fell in with the remains of those huts which are so commonly found in districts frequented by the Greenland tribes; the survivors of the "Forward" and the "Porpoise" seemed to be the first to tread this unknown soil.

But though men were not to be dreaded, animals might be formidable, and the fort, thus defended, ought to secure its little garrison against their attacks.



CHAPTER VII.

DISCUSSING THE MAPS.

DURING these preparations for wintering, Altamont had entirely recovered his strength, and was able to assist in unloading the vessel; his vigorous constitution at last triumphed, and his healthy appearance soon returned.

He was once more the robust and sanguine citizen of the United States; an energetic and intelligent man, endowed with great resolution of character—an enterprising, bold American, ready for anything. He came originally from New York; had been at sea from childhood—so he told his new associates; his vessel, the “Porpoise,” had been fitted and sent out by a company of wealthy merchants belonging to the Union, at the head of which was the famous Mr. Grinnel.

Hatteras and he had many points of resemblance in their dispositions in common, but not the least sympathy. Nor was this resemblance calculated to make these two men friends, but the reverse; for an observer would end by discovering serious elements of disagreement between them. For instance, while affecting the more frankness, Altamont was really much less sincere than Hatteras; with more offhandedness, he was less honest; his apparent openness did not inspire as much confidence as the Captain’s gloomier disposition. The latter said what he meant, and then was silent. The former, though he talked a great deal, very often said nothing at all.

This was the opinion the Doctor formed of the American’s character, and he had reason to foresee future antipathy, if not hatred, between the two Captains of the “Forward” and the “Porpoise.”

And yet there could be but one commander out of these two Captains. Hatteras certainly had a right to the American's obedience—right of seniority, and of greater strength. But if one was at the head of his men, the other was on board his own ship. This feeling was perceptible in both. By policy, or instinctively, Altamont was from the first drawn towards the Doctor; he owed him his life, but sympathy attached him to that worthy man still more than gratitude.

Such was the inevitable consequence of the worthy Clawbonny's character. Friends grew around him as flowers spring up in the sun. Men have been mentioned who got up at five in the morning to make themselves enemies; the Doctor might have got up at four without succeeding.

However, he determined to profit by Altamont's friendship to learn the true reason of his presence in the Polar seas.

But the American, though verbose to a degree, never really said anything in reply, and talked as usual about a North-west Passage.

The Doctor suspected this expedition had another motive, the same that Hatteras feared. He therefore resolved the two adversaries should never come to open discussion on the subject; but sometimes he failed in his good intentions. The most ordinary conversation would occasionally drift on to dangerous topics, and any word might light the spark of rival interests.

This very soon happened. When the house was finished the Doctor determined to inaugurate it by a grand dinner—a good idea of Clawbonny, who was glad to introduce the habits and pleasures of European life. Bell had just shot some ptarmigan and a white hare—the first messengers of the coming spring.

This dinner took place on the 14th of April, the second Sunday after Easter, on a fine dry day; but the cold made no attempt to penetrate the house; the stoves in it kept it at bay. They had a good dinner: the fresh meat was a pleasant change from pemmican and salt beef; and everyone was helped twice to a plum-pudding, made by the Doctor himself.

Spirits made their appearance after dinner. The American was no teetotaler; and there was, therefore, no reason why he should deprive himself of his usual glass. The other guests had no hesitation in joining him, in moderation, by the Doctor's order, at the end of the dinner. When the health of the Union was proposed, Hatteras remained silent.

It was then that the Doctor brought forward a very interesting subject of discussion :—

“ My friends,” said he, “ it is not enough to have got through straits, ice-floes, ice-fields, and to have arrived where we are ; there is still something left to be done. I am about to propose to you to name this hospitable land, where we have found safety and rest ; it is a custom observed by all navigators, and there is not one of them who would have failed to do so under similar circumstances. We shall have to give names to all the localities which we shall describe in our maps and charts of these regions when we return. The necessity of that is obvious.”

“ Well said ! ” cried Johnson. “ Besides, when we can give an especial name to all this land, it gives it more importance ; and one can no longer consider oneself as lost on an unknown continent.”

“ Besides,” added Bell, “ that simplifies instructions on a voyage, and renders the execution of orders easier. We may be forced to separate on some expedition, or lose ourselves when hunting ; and there is nothing so likely to help one in finding one’s road again as knowing what its name is.”

“ Well,” said the Doctor, “ since we are all agreed on this subject, let us try and agree on the names to be chosen, and we must forget neither our country nor our friends in so doing. Nothing could give me more pleasure, when I cast my eyes on a map, than to see the name of a countryman to a cape, an island, or in the middle of some sea. It is a very charming intervention of friendship with geography.”

“ You are quite right, Doctor,” said the American ; “ and what is more, you say these things in such a manner as to add to their value.”

“ Come, then,” said the Doctor, “ let us proceed in order.”

Hatteras had not yet taken part in the conversation ; he had been thinking. As his companions’ eyes were all fixed upon him, he got up and said :—

“ Under correction.—and no one here, I think, will contradict me—at that moment Hatteras was looking at Altamont—it seems to me only right and fitting that we should give our house the name of its talented architect—the best man among us—and call it the ‘ Doctor’s House.’ ”

“ That’s it,” replied Bell.

"Good!" cried Johnson—"the 'Doctor's House.'"

"It could not be better named," said Altamont. "Hurrah! for Dr. Clawbonny."

"So, then," continued Hatteras, "let this house be so called, until some new land gives us the opportunity of baptizing it with our friend's name."

"Ah!" said old Johnson, "if a terrestrial paradise was in want of a name, the name of Clawbonny would suit it exactly."

The Doctor's modesty prompted him to decline the honour, but he was obliged to give way. It was, therefore, duly agreed that this extremely pleasant dinner had been eaten in the great dining-room of Doctor's House, having been cooked in the kitchen of Doctor's House, and that afterwards they all hoped to sleep soundly in Doctor's House.

"Now," said the Doctor, "let us proceed to the more important points of our discoveries."

"There is that immense sea surrounding us, which has never yet borne a vessel on its bosom."

"Not a vessel! It seems to me," said Altamont, "that the 'Porpoise' ought not to be forgotten, unless you think she came hither by land."

"One might think so," returned Hatteras, "to see her stranded on those rocks below."

"Indeed, Hatteras," said Altamont, with a mortified air, "that is better than being blown up, like the 'Forward.'"

Hatteras was about to make an angry retort, but the Doctor interfered.

"My friends," said he, "we are not discussing ships, but a sea, and that a new one."

"It is no new sea," replied Altamont; "it is called the Northern Ocean; and I don't see any occasion for changing its name; by-and-by, if we ascertain it is but a strait or a gulf, we can see what ought to be done."

"So be it," said Hatteras.

"Then that is settled," replied the Doctor, regretting having raised a discussion so pregnant with national rivalry.

"Let us now come to the land we have at this moment under our feet," resumed Hatteras. "I am not aware that it bears a name in any of the latest maps."

As he spoke, he fixed Altamont with a look ; but the latter never dropped his eyes, and replied :—

“ You may be mistaken again, Hatteras.”

“ Mistaken ! What, this unknown land ?—This——”

“ Has a name already,” the American answered, quietly.

Hatteras said nothing.

“ And what may its name be ?” asked the Doctor, rather surprised at Altamont’s assertion.

“ My dear Clawbonny, it is the custom, not to say the right, of every navigator to name the continent he is the first to discover. It seems to me that on this occasion I might—that, indeed, I had a right—an undisputed right——”

“ But——” began Johnson, who was annoyed at Altamont’s coolness.

“ It seems to me very difficult to dispute the fact,” said the latter, “ that the ‘ Porpoise ’ touched ground on this coast—even admitting she came by land,” added he, looking at Hatteras ; “ there can be no question of that.”

“ This is a claim I can never admit,” gravely replied Hatteras, checking himself. “ To have a right to name, we must, at least, have discovered it ; and I don’t suppose you claim to have done anything of the sort. Besides, had it not been for us, where, sir, would you have been ?—you, who come laying down the law to us ? Why, under twenty feet of snow.”

“ And without me, sir, and without my ship,” returned the American, “ what would you be at this moment ? Dead, of cold and hunger.”

“ My friends,” said the Doctor, trying to quiet matters, “ be calm, and everything can be arranged. Listen to me.”

“ That gentleman,” continued Altamont, pointing to the Captain, “ may name any other lands he discovers—if he ever does discover any ; but this continent is mine ! I do not even allow it to bear two names, like Grinnel Land, also called Prince Albert Land, because an American and an Englishman discovered it at the same time. Here it is another affair. My right of precedence cannot be disputed. The keel of no vessel before mine has ever touched this shore ; not a human being before me has ever set foot on this continent ; now I have named it, and it shall keep its name.”

“ And what name have you given it ?” asked the Doctor.

"New America," replied Altamont.

Hatteras clenched his fist on the table, but he checked himself with a violent effort.

"Can you prove," resumed Altamont, "that an Englishman ever set foot on this soil before an American?"

Johnson and Bell were silent, though they were no less irritated than the Captain by the assurance of the American; but there was no reply to make.

The Doctor began again, after a few moments of painful silence—

"My friends, the first of human laws is the law of justice; it contains all others. Let us, then, be just, and not give way to bad feeling. The priority of Altamont's claim is not to be disputed; our turn must come another time. Old England shall have her share of our future discoveries. Let, then, the name of this land be New America. But, I suppose, Altamont, in thus naming it, has not taken possession of all the bays, capes, and promontories it contains, and I see nothing to prevent our giving the name of Victoria to this bay."

"None, whatever, if that cape which runs out into the sea bears the name of Washington."

"You might, sir," cried Hatteras, quite beside himself, "have given it a name less obnoxious to English ears."

"But most dear to American ears," replied Altamont, proudly.

"Come, come," said the Doctor, who had enough to do to keep the peace in his small world, "let us have no discussions of this sort. An American may well be proud of her great men! Let us honour genius wherever it is to be found, and since Altamont has made his choice, let us now speak for ourselves and our friends. Our Captain——"

"Doctor," replied the latter, "this land being now American soil, I desire my name may not figure there."

"Is that your decision?" said the Doctor.

"Absolutely," replied Hatteras.

The Doctor did not insist.

"Well, now it is our turn," said he, addressing the carpenter and the boatswain. "We must leave some traces of our passage here. I propose to call the island which we can see lying about three miles out, Johnson Island, in honour of our boatswain."

"Oh, Mr. Clawbonny!" said the latter, rather confused.

"And that mountain which we see there to westward shall be called Bell Mount, if the carpenter has no objection."

"It is too great an honour for me," replied Bell.

"It is only justice," returned the Doctor.

"Nothing more," said Altamont.

"We have now only to give a name to our fort; about that we will have no discussion whatever: we are neither indebted to Her Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria, nor to Washington, that we are sheltered here now, but to God, who, in bringing us together, has saved us all. Let this fort be called Fort Providence."

"Very properly named," said Altamont.

"Fort Providence," remarked Johnson—"that sounds well. So, in returning from our expeditions northward we shall pass Cape Washington to reach Victoria Bay, and thence to Fort Providence, where in Doctor's House we shall find rest and refreshment."

"So that is settled," replied the Doctor. "By-and-by, with other discoveries, we shall have other names to bestow, which I trust will cause no discussion; for, my friends, here we must live and support one another; we represent the whole of humanity on this strip of coast; let us, then, not abandon ourselves to those detestable passions which are a curse to society; but let us hold together to remain strong and unshaken in adversity. Who knows what dangers Heaven has got in store for us, before we see our country again? Let us five, therefore, be as one man, and lay aside these rivalries which ought never to exist either here or elsewhere. Do you hear me, Altamont? You, Hatteras?"

Neither gave him any answer; but the Doctor took their silence for assent.

Then they talked of other things: they arranged hunting-parties, to renew and vary their stock of meat: with spring, hares, partridges, —even foxes and bears, would return. They, therefore, decided on not allowing the first favourable day to pass without going out to reconnoitre New America.



CHAPTER VIII.

EXCURSION TO THE NORTH OF VICTORIA BAY.

THE next day, with the first rays of the sun, Clawbonny climbed the steep rocky wall against which Doctor's House was built, and which terminated abruptly in a sort of broken cone. The Doctor got to the summit of it at last, and thence he cast his eyes over a vast extent of broken ground, apparently the result of some volcanic shock; one vast white curtain covered continent and sea, so that it was not possible to distinguish one from the other.

When he observed that this point commanded the whole surrounding plain, an idea occurred to him which would hardly surprise those who knew him.

He thought over this idea, arranged it, examined it carefully, and was quite master of it when he returned home and communicated it to his companions.

"It has occurred to me that it would be a good plan to establish a light-house on the top of this cone above our heads."

"A light-house!" they exclaimed.

"Yes, a light-house! It would be of double utility—to guide us at night when we are returning from distant expeditions, and that of lighting up our bit of ground during the eight winter months."

"There is no doubt," said Altamont, "that such an apparatus would be very useful, but how will you erect it?"

"With one of the 'Porpoise's' lights."

"True, but how will you feed your lamp? With seal-oil?"

"Not at all; the light produced by that oil is not sufficiently powerful; it would hardly be visible through the fog."

"Do you pretend you can get gas out of our coal, and so light it?"

"Good; that light is also too weak, and it is open to the serious objection that it would consume our fuel."

"Then," said Altamont, "I really cannot see——"

"For my part," observed Johnson, "since the quicksilver bullet, the ice lens, and the building of Fort Providence, I believe Mr. Clawbonny capable of anything."

"Well," resumed Altamont, "will you explain to us what sort of a light-house you intend to erect?"

"It is a very simple one," replied the Doctor, "it is an electric light."

"Electric light?"

"Of course; have you not a Bunzen battery on board the 'Porpoise' in perfect order?"

"Yes, there is," replied the American.

"Then it is quite clear when you put it on board, you had some experiment in view, for there is nothing wanting (neither conducting wires completely isolated, nor sulphuric acid) necessary to put all the elements in action. It is therefore a very easy affair to produce electric light—we shall see better, and it will cost nothing."

"That is perfect," replied the boatswain, "and the less time we lose——"

"Well, the materials are there, and in an hour we shall have built up a column ten feet high, which will be quite sufficient."

The Doctor, followed by his companions, soon raised a pillar on the top of the cone, crowned by one of the lanterns belonging to the 'Porpoise.'

Then the Doctor arranged the conducting wires to the battery, placed the battery itself in the parlour of the ice house, where the cold protected it from the heat of the stoves; from thence the wires led into the light-house lamp.

It was all done very soon, and they waited for sunset to judge the effect. At night, two bits of carbon kept in the lantern at a proper distance were brought into connection, and rays of intense light, unaffected by the wind, were thrown out from the light-house. It was a marvellous sight to see these rays of light rivalling the whiteness of the plains, and distinctly marking the shadows of all the projections around it. Johnson could not help clapping his hands.

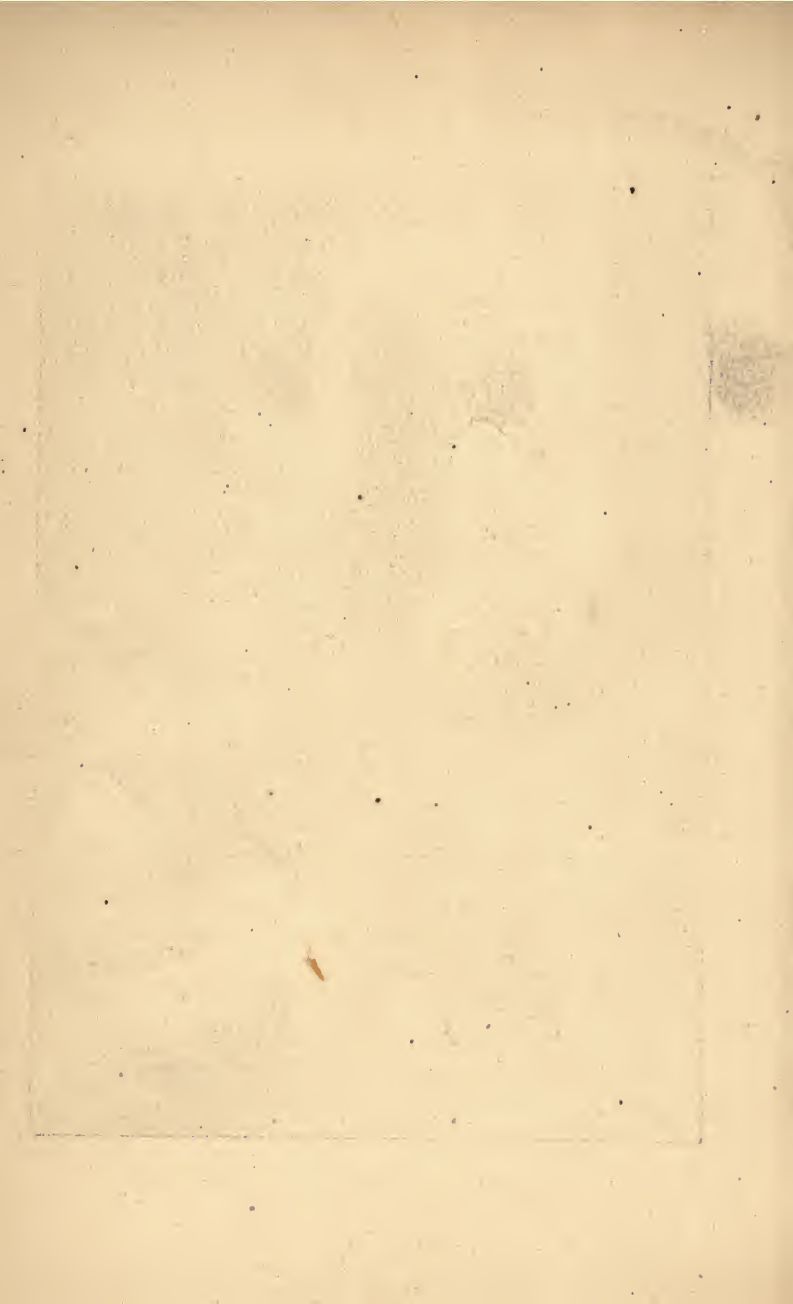
"Here is Mr. Clawbonny, making suns now!"



The hunters turned their steps towards Cape Washington.

The Desert of Ice.

PAGE 55.



The cold soon put a stop to the demonstrations of admiration, and they all went and crept under their blankets.

Their life was then regularly organized:

The weather from the 15th to the 20th of April was very changeable; the temperature jumped at once twenty degrees, and the atmosphere was also very uncertain—sometimes whirlwinds of snow, and sometimes so cold and dry that they could not stir out of doors without great precaution.

On Saturday the wind went down; this circumstance made an excursion possible; they therefore resolved to give a day towards renewing their stock of fresh provisions.

In the morning Altamont, the Doctor, and Bell, each armed with double-barrelled guns, an axe and a snow-knife (in case it should be necessary to construct a shelter for themselves), set out; the weather was dull.

While they were absent, Hatteras was to reconnoitre the coast and make some observations. The Doctor took care to set the electric light going; its rays successfully rivalled those of the sun; in fact, electric light, which equals three thousand wax candles and three hundred jets of gas, is the only one which can bear any comparison with the light of the sun.

The cold was sharp but dry, without wind.

The hunters turned their steps towards Cape Washington, and the hardened snow was favourable for walking. In half-an-hour they had covered the three miles which separated the Cape from Fort Providence; "Duke" gambolled about them.

The coast turned inwards towards the east, and the lofty heights above Victoria Bay rather sank to the northward; which gave rise to the supposition that new America might very probably be only an island; but the question of its configuration was not now raised.

The hunters followed the coast; not a trace of habitations nor remains of huts; they were treading a soil hitherto untouched by human foot.

They had thus gone about fifteen miles in the first three hours, eating without stopping, but it seemed their hunt was without results. They saw hardly any tracks of hares, foxes, or wolves. A few snow-birds were flying about, announcing the return of spring, and with it that of Arctic animals.

They had been obliged to turn inland to avoid the deep ravines

and steep rocks which were connected with Bell Mount. After some delay they regained the shore ; the ice had not yet broken up—far from it, the sea was still frozen ; but they found some seal-tracks, and it was evident from recent fractures in the ice several of them had been recently on shore.

These animals are very fond of basking in the sun. The Doctor drew his companion's attention to these peculiarities.

"Give particular attention to this place," said he, "it is very possible that in summer we may meet with hundreds of seals here ; they are very easily approached in regions little frequented by man, and are then easily taken. But we must be careful not to scare them, for then they disappear like magic and return no more ; ignorant hunters, instead of killing them one by one, have often attacked them in a mass with noise and shouting, and have consequently seriously compromised their chance of a cargo."

"Are they hunted only for their skins and their oil ?" asked Bell.

"By Europeans, yes ; but the Esquimaux eat them. They live on them, and bits of seal's flesh, mixed with blood and fat, are not very tempting. After all, there is some way of preparing it, and I will undertake to produce as fine cutlets as can be seen, notwithstanding their rather dark colour."

"Well, we shall put you to the proof," replied Bell ; "I promise to eat as much seal's flesh as you like, Mr. Clawbonny."

"You mean, Bell, as much as you like yourself. But you may do your best, you can never equal a Greenlander's voracity, who consumes in one day from ten to fifteen pounds of this meat."

"Fifteen pounds ! What stomachs !"

"Polar stomachs," rejoined the Doctor, "which dilate at will, and, I may add, contract also, and even support starvation as well as plenty. At the beginning of dinner an Esquimaux is lean ; at the end of it he is fat—he is not to be recognized. It is true his dinner sometimes lasts him a whole day."

"This voracity," said Altamont, "is evidently peculiar to the inhabitants of cold countries."

"I believe so. In Arctic regions it is of first necessity to eat a great deal ; it is one of the conditions, not only of strength, but of life. The Hudson's Bay Company allows every man eight pounds of meat or twelve of fish, or two of pemmican daily."

"That is a cheerful allowance," remarked the carpenter.

"Not so much as you would suppose, my friend; and an Indian fed like that would not do more work than an Englishman on his pound of beef and pint of beer."

"Then, Mr. Clawbonny, everything is best as it is."

"No doubt of it. When Sir John Ross wintered in Boothia Land, he was always surprised at the voracity of his guides. He tells a story of two men—only two—who in one day devoured a whole quarter of a musk-ox. They cut the meat in long strips, which they put down their throats, and cut off the ends close to their mouths, which they passed on to their companions. Well, these gluttons let these strips of meat hang out of their mouths on the ground till they had digested them, as a boa-constrictor digests an ox, and, like him, stretched out at full length on the ground."

"Fie!" cried Bell—"the disgusting brutes!"

"Every man dines after his own fashion," the American philosophically remarked. "Since the question of food is of so imperative a nature in these latitudes, I am not surprised that there is so much said about it in the accounts of Arctic travellers."

"You are quite right," replied the Doctor. "I have made the same remark myself. It arises, not only from the necessity that exists for plenty of food, but also because it is often so difficult to obtain it. Consequently, as they are always thinking about it, they often talk about it."

"But," said Altamont, "if my memory serves me, in Norway, a very cold country, the peasants there don't require such substantial nourishment; a little milk, eggs, birchwood bark bread, sometimes salmon, never meat; and yet they are a fine strong race of men."

"That is a question of organization," replied Clawbonny, "which I will not take upon myself to explain. But, I believe that a second or third generation of Norwegians transplanted into Greenland would finish by feeding like the Greenlanders, and we ourselves, my friends, if we were to remain in this delightful country, would also live in the Esquimaux fashion, and perhaps become as great gluttons."

"Mr. Clawbonny makes me hungry when he talks like that," said Bell.

"No," returned Altamont; "it would rather disgust me with seal's flesh for ever. But, look there, I think we may have a chance

of testing this opinion. If I am not mistaken, I think I can see a moving mass on that block of ice."

"It is a morse," cried the Doctor; "be quiet."

In fact a very large amphibious animal was rolling about in the sun's rays, two hundred yards from the hunters.

They divided themselves, so as to cut off the animal's retreat; and, by keeping behind the hummocks of ice, they got within some yards of him, when they fired. The morse or walrus turned over, but was still full of life. He crushed the ice, and tried to make his escape; but Altamont, with his axe, cut off his dorsal fins, and another shot or two despatched him. It was a very fine animal, measuring more than fifteen feet in length from his muzzle to the end of his tail, and he would certainly have yielded several barrels of oil. The Doctor cut off the best pieces of meat, and left the rest at the disposal of several crows, who were already making their appearance on the field of action.

Night began to draw on. They thought of returning to Fort Providence. The sky had become quite clear, and while waiting for moonlight the stars shone out magnificently.

"Come, we must be off home," said the Doctor. "We have not shot much; but a hunter has no right to complain when he brings his supper back with him. We will go the shortest way, and try not to lose ourselves. The stars are there to show us the way."

In these countries, where the Pole-star is just over his head, the traveller ought not to take it for his guide; for when the north is exactly the highest point in the dome of heaven, the other cardinal points are difficult to determine; but the moon and other constellations fortunately aided the Doctor in finding his way. To shorten the distance, he determined to avoid the windings of the shore, and to cut across the land. It was more direct, though less sure; so in a few hours they had quite lost their way. The question was raised whether they should pass the night in an ice hut, and rest there till morning; but the Doctor was afraid of making Hatteras and Johnson uneasy, and insisted on continuing their endeavours to find the road.

"'Duke,'" said he, "guides us, and he cannot make a mistake. His instinct does without star or compass: we cannot do better than follow him."

The Doctor was quite right: they soon saw a light on the horizon

—which was not to be mistaken for a star—shining through the low mists.

“There is our light,” cried the Doctor. “I am sure of it, Bell—walk on!”

By degrees, as the travellers came up to it, the light became more and more intense, and they were soon walking in a wide ray of light. Behind them were their gigantic shadows, stretching away on the snowy carpet. They quickened their pace, and half-an-hour afterwards they were climbing up the acclivity of Fort Providence.





CHAPTER IX.

COLD AND HEAT.

HATTERAS and Johnson were uneasily looking out for the three hunters, who were delighted to find themselves comfortably sheltered again. With the approach of evening the temperature had become singularly lower, and the thermometer outside indicated seventy-three degrees below zero. They were worn out with fatigue and almost frozen. Fortunately, the stoves gave out plenty of heat. The Doctor, as cook, soon put on the gridiron a few walrus cutlets, and at nine in the evening they sat down to a cheerful supper.

"Upon my word," said Bell, "at the risk of passing for an Esquimaux, I must allow that in winter quarters one's meals are a very great thing; when one has killed it oneself there is no hesitating about eating it."

Each of the companions at table had his mouth too full to answer the carpenter's observation, but the Doctor nodded assent. Walrus cutlets were declared excellent, or, if they were not declared to be so, they were all eaten, which was the equivalent to saying so.

After dinner the Doctor made the coffee, according to his usual custom; he allowed no one else to do so, but made it on the table with a spirit-lamp and poured it out boiling hot. If it did not burn his tongue he did not think it fit to drink. That evening he drank it so hot his companions were unable to imitate him.

"You will burn yourself up, Doctor," said Altamont.

"Not I," replied he.

"You must have had your throat coppered," said Johnson.

"Not at all, my friends; I recommend you to follow my example. There are people, and I am one of them, who drink their coffee at 130 degrees."

"At 130 degrees!" cried Altamont; "one's hand cannot bear such heat as that."

"Evidently, Altamont; for the hand cannot bear more than 122 degrees in water; but the tongue and the palate are less sensitive to heat than the hand, and they can bear what the hand cannot touch."

"You astonish me," said Altamont.

"There is nothing like conviction;" and the Doctor, taking the thermometer in the dining-room, plunged it into his cup of boiling coffee. He waited until it marked 131 deg., and then drank his coffee with evident marks of satisfaction.

Bell bravely tried to imitate him, but scalded himself and began to call out.

"Want of practice," said the Doctor.

"Can you tell us, Clawbonny, the highest temperature the human body is capable of supporting?"

"Easily," replied Clawbonny. "Experiments have been made, and curious facts elicited in this respect. I remember one or two, and they will prove to you that habit does everything, even in accustoming one to a heat which would cook a beef-steak. It is said that the servant-girls at the public oven in the town of La Rochefoucauld, in France, could remain in that oven for ten minutes at a temperature of 300 deg., that is to say, 89 deg. hotter than boiling water, while apples and meat were roasting round them."

"What girls!" cried Altamont.

"Here is another fact which cannot be disputed. Nine of our countrymen in 1774—Fordyce, Banks, Solander, Blagden, Horne, North, Lord Seaforth, and Captain Henry Philips—supported a temperature of 295 deg. while eggs and roast beef were cooked near them."

"And they were Englishmen," said Bell, proudly.

"Oh, Americans would have done better still," said Altamont.

"They would have stayed to be roasted themselves," said Clawbonny, laughing.

"Why not?" replied the American. "At all events, they never tried, so I will stand by my countrymen. I will add one fact which seems incredible, were it not for the unimpeachable veracity of the witnesses. The Duke of Ragusa and Doctor Jung, a Frenchman and an Austrian, saw a Turk plunge into a bath at 170 deg."

"But, it seems to me, that is nothing to the four girls in the oven and our countrymen," said Johnson.

"I beg your pardon—there is a great difference between plunging into hot air and hot water: hot air brings on perspiration which protects the flesh, while in hot water one cannot perspire, but one burns. Thus the extreme limit of a hot bath in general is 107 deg. The Turk, therefore, must have been an extraordinary man, to support such a heat."

"Mr. Clawbonny," asked Johnson, "what is the usual temperature of living creatures?"

"It varies, according to their nature; thus the temperature of birds is higher than that of beasts; then come mammalia—men, for instance; the average temperature of the English is in general 101 deg."

"I am sure Mr. Altamont will claim as much for the Americans," said Johnson, laughing.

"Upon my word," said Altamont, "there are some who are very hot; but as I have not put a thermometer down their throats or under their tongues, I cannot speak with any degree of certainty."

"There is no remarkable difference," said the Doctor, "between men of different races when they are situated under identical circumstances; whatever food they eat, I should say the temperature of the human body is much the same at the Equator as at the Pole."

"Then," said Altamont, "our own heat is the same here as in England."

"Much about the same; as for the other mammalia, their temperature is in general rather higher than that of man. The horse approaches him the nearest, as also the hare, the elephant, the porpoise, and the tiger; but the cat, the squirrel, the rat, the panther, the sheep, the ox, the dog, the monkey, and the goat reach 103 deg., and the most favoured of all—the hog—exceeds 104 deg."

"Rather humiliating for us," said Altamont.

"Amphibious animals and fish come next, the temperature of which varies according to that of water. The serpent has only 86 deg., the frog 74 deg., and the shark a degree and a half less, while insects seem to have the same temperature as water and air."

"All that is very well," said Hatteras, speaking for the first time, "and I thank the Doctor for giving us the benefit of his scientific

attainments; but we have been talking as if we had to brave the heats of the torrid zone. Would it not be more fitting to talk about cold?—to know to what we are exposed, and what has been the lowest temperature hitherto known?”

“Very true,” said Johnson.

“Nothing can be easier,” remarked the Doctor. “You know what in my turn I have learned from others, and when I have said what I have to say, you will know as much as I do. This, then, is what I have to tell you about cold, and the low temperature which Europe has at one time or other experienced. We can reckon a great many memorable winters, and it seems the most rigorous are subject to a periodical return every forty-one years or thereabouts—a return which coincides with the greatest appearance of spots on the sun. I will quote the winter of 1364, when the Rhone was frozen as far as Arles; that of 1408, when the Danube was frozen its entire length, and when the wolves crossed the Cattegat with dry feet; that of 1509, when the Adriatic and the Mediterranean were frozen at Venice, Cette, and Marseilles, and the Baltic still frozen on the 10th of April; that of 1608, which killed nearly all the cattle in England; that of 1789, when the Thames was frozen down to Gravesend, four-and-twenty miles below London Bridge; that of 1813, of which the French have still such a terrible remembrance, and lastly, that of 1829, the earliest as well as the longest winter of the nineteenth century. So much for Europe.”

“But here, beyond the Polar circle, what degree of temperature is the lowest we are likely to experience?” asked Altamont.

“I think,” replied the Doctor, “that we have experienced the greatest cold that has ever been observed, for the spirit thermometer marked one day 72 degrees below zero, and if my memory does not deceive me, the lowest temperature hitherto known by Arctic travellers has been only 61 deg. at Melville Island, 65 deg. at Port Felix, and 70 deg. at Fort Reliance.”

“Yes,” said Hatteras, “we were stopped by a hard winter, and very inopportunistly.”

“You were stopped?” said Altamont, looking hard at the Captain.

“In our voyage to the westward,” interposed the Doctor, hurriedly.

“So,” said Altamont, returning to the subject, “the maximum

and minimum temperature which man can support have a variation of about two hundred degrees?"

"Yes," replied Clawbonny; "a thermometer exposed to the air, and protected from all reverberation, never rises higher than 135 deg. above zero, as in great cold it is never lower than 72 deg. below zero. So you see, my friends, we may make ourselves easy."

"But, nevertheless," said Johnson, "if the sun were to be suddenly extinguished, would not the earth be plunged into a state of still greater cold?"

"The sun will not be extinguished," replied the Doctor, "and if it were, the temperature probably would not be lower than what I have just stated."

"That is very curious."

"A French savant, named Fourier, has proved that if the earth were placed in a medium deprived of all warmth, the intensity of the cold we observe at the Pole would be much more considerable, and there would be no very great difference in temperature between day and night; so you see, my friends, it is not much colder several millions of leagues distant than here."

"Tell me, Doctor," said Altamont, "is not the temperature of America lower than that of any other country?"

"No doubt it is, but that is nothing to be vain about," replied the Doctor.

"And how do you explain that phenomenon?"

"Attempts have been made to explain it, but in an unsatisfactory manner; for instance, the idea occurred to Halley that a comet had once come into collision with the earth and changed its axis of rotation, that is to say, the position of its Poles. According to him, the North Pole, formerly situated at Hudson's Bay, was carried more to the east, and the former countries of the Pole, so long frozen, have retained a greater degree of cold, which many long ages of sunshine have not yet been able to eradicate."

"But do you admit this theory?"

"Not for an instant; for what is true as far as regards the east coast of America is false as regards the west, the temperature of which is much higher. No, it must be allowed that there are isothermal lines differing from the terrestrial parallels, and that is all."

"Do you know, Mr. Clawbonny, it is very pleasant to talk about cold where we are now?" said old Johnson.

"So it is, my friend; we are quite in a position to add practice to theory. These regions are one vast laboratory in which we can make curious experiments respecting low temperatures; only we must always be attentive and prudent. If one part of the body is frost-bitten, it must be immediately rubbed with snow to restore the circulation; if you go near the fire you might easily burn your hands or feet without feeling it, which would necessitate amputation, and we must be careful to leave nothing of us behind in these frozen regions. And now, my friends, I think we have nothing better to do than to go to sleep."

"Willingly," said they all.

"Who is on duty at the stove?"

"I," replied Bell.

"Well, then, mind you don't let the fire out; for to-night it is fearfully cold!"

"Be easy, Mr. Clawbonny; it is freezing hard, and still the sky seems on fire."

"Yes," replied the Doctor, going to the window—a most beautiful aurora borealis! What a magnificent sight! I could never be tired of looking at it."

The Doctor was never tired of admiring these phenomena, to which his companions gave little heed now. He had noticed that their appearance was always preceded by disturbances of the magnetic needle, and he was preparing some observations on this subject destined for insertion in his weather-book.

They were all soon sleeping peaceably, while Bell kept watch over the stove.





CHAPTER X.

THE PLEASURES OF WINTER QUARTERS.

LIFE at the Pole is dismally uniform. Man is entirely at the mercy of the atmosphere, which brings about storms and intense cold with a monotony which almost drives one to despair. The greater part of the time it is impossible to set foot out of doors, and one is compelled to remain shut up in an ice house. Long months are passed in this manner, almost reducing men to the level of moles.

The next day the thermometer fell, and the air was filled with snow-gusts which absorbed the daylight. The Doctor found himself confined to the house, and sat with his arms folded; he had nothing to do except to keep the entrance corridor clear of snow every hour, and to polish the icy walls, which the heat of the interior rendered damp; but the house was very solidly constructed, and the whirlwinds of snow added to its resistance by increasing the thickness of the walls.

The magazines were in equally good condition. Everything taken from the ship had been arranged in great order in these warehouses, as the Doctor called them. Now, although these magazines were sixty yards distant from the house, still on certain days, after a great drift, it was impossible to get there, and they therefore always kept a certain amount of provisions in the kitchen for daily use. The precaution of discharging the cargo of the "Porpoise" proved a wise one. The vessel was undergoing gentle, insensible, but irresistible pressure, which was crushing it by degrees. It was evident that nothing could be made of its remains; still the Doctor hoped to be able to build a craft of some sort to carry them back to England; but the moment for constructing it was not yet come.

Thus the greater part of the time they spent in complete idleness. Hatteras lay deep in thought, stretched on his bed ; Altamont drank or slept, and the Doctor took good care not to rouse either of them, for he was always afraid of a quarrel between them. These two men hardly ever spoke to one another. The worthy Doctor was the soul of this little world, from which sentiments of frankness and justice constantly radiated. His companions had absolute confidence in him ; he was even a check upon Hatteras, who liked him exceedingly : by words, manners, and habits he succeeded so well that the lives of these five men, abandoned at six degrees from the Pole, seemed quite a natural state of things : while the Doctor was talking one might fancy they were listening to him in his library at Liverpool.

And yet how this situation differed from that of sailors wrecked on the islands of the Pacific Ocean !—those Robinson Crusoes whose attractive stories filled their readers with envy. There a fertile soil—abundant Nature offered a thousand varied resources ; while here, on the coast of New America, how great a difference ! This comparison was often made by the Doctor, but he kept it to himself, and often cursed his enforced idleness. He ardently longed for the return of the thaw, that he might take to his excursions again ; and yet he almost dreaded the moment, for he foresaw serious disputes between Hatteras and Altamont. If they ever got to the Pole what must be the result of these two men's rivalry ? It was therefore necessary to be prepared for any event that might happen—try and bring these rivals by degrees to sincere accord together and an open exchange of ideas ; but to reconcile an American and an Englishman was a task full of difficulty.

The Doctor often discussed this subject with Johnson. The old sailor and he were quite of the same opinion on the subject ; they were equally at a loss what course to take, and they could foresee many complications in the future.

Still the bad weather continued ; they could not venture to leave Fort Providence even for an hour. They were compelled to remain day and night in the snow house. They were all dull but the Doctor, who always found some occupation.

“ Is there no possibility of amusing oneself ? ” said Altamont one evening. “ This is really not living, but breathing only, like reptiles in their holes under ground.”

"Unfortunately," said the Doctor, "we are not numerous enough to organize some systematic means of amusement."

"So," replied the American, "you consider, it would be less difficult to struggle against idleness if there were more of us?"

"No doubt of it; and when whole crews have passed the winter in Arctic regions they found means to amuse themselves."

"Indeed," said Altamont, "I should like to know how they set about it? They must have been truly ingenious to extract any amusement from such a situation. I suppose they did not act charades!"

"No, but not far from it," replied the Doctor. "They introduced two great sources of amusement, the Press and the Theatre, into these Arctic regions."

"What! they had a newspaper?" asked the American.

"They acted stage-plays?" cried Bell.

"No doubt they did, and pleased themselves very much by doing so. While Commander Parry wintered at Melville Island he proposed these two amusements to his crews, and his proposition was immensely successful."

"Well," observed Johnson, "I should have liked to have been there, very much indeed; it must have been curious."

"Curious and amusing too, Johnson. Lieutenant Beechey was stage-manager, and Captain Sabine editor-in-chief of the 'Winter Chronicle, or Gazette of North Georgia.'"

"Both very good names," observed Altamont.

"The newspaper came out every Monday, from the 1st of November, 1819, to the 20th of March, 1820. It reported all incidents at winter quarters, the sport, general news, accidents, meteorological observations, temperature; it contained stories more or less amusing. If the wit of Sterne, or the charming articles of the 'Daily Telegraph' were not to be found in it, it answered the purpose of amusing the men, who were neither difficult nor exacting; and I may say the office of journalist was never more agreeable."

"Upon my word," said Altamont, "I should like to see some extracts from that paper, my dear Doctor. Its articles must have been frozen from the first word to the last."

"Not at all. Anyhow, what would have seemed rather simple to the Philosophic Society of Liverpool, or the Literary Institute of

London, was quite sufficient for crews buried in snow. Would you like to judge for yourself?"

"Is your memory good enough to furnish you——?"

"No, but you had Parry's Voyages on board the 'Porpoise,' and I need only read you what he says about it."

"Pray do!" cried the Doctor's companions.

"Nothing can be easier."

The Doctor went and fetched the book, and had no difficulty in finding the passage referred to.

"Here," said he, "are some extracts from the 'North Georgia Gazette.' It is a letter addressed to the editor:—'Your proposal to establish a newspaper among us has been received with great satisfaction. I am convinced that, under your direction, it will provide us with amusement and greatly lighten the weight of our hundred days of darkness. The interest which I take in it, for my part, has induced me to examine the effect your announcement has made on our society in general, and I can assure you—to use an expression consecrated by the London Press—that it has produced a profound impression on the public. The day after the issue of your prospectus there was an unprecedented demand for ink on board. The green cloth of the tables was covered with cuttings of pens, to the great injury of one of our servants, who, in shaking the cloth to get rid of them pricked his finger with one of them; and I know for a fact that Sergeant Martin had no less than nine penknives to sharpen.'

'All our tables are groaning under the weight of desks, which have not seen light for the last two months, and they say the hold has been opened several times to bring up reams of paper which had no expectation of being wanted yet. I must not forget to tell you that I have some suspicion an attempt will be made to slip into your box several articles which, being deficient in originality, or not being previously unedited, will not meet your views. I am in a position to state that no later than last evening an author was seen leaning over his desk, holding in one hand an open volume of the "Spectator," while with the other he was trying to thaw his ink over the lamp! It is hardly necessary to recommend you to be on your guard against such tricks; it must not be said that we find reappear in the 'Winter Chronicle' what our ancestors read at breakfast a hundred years ago.' "

"Very good indeed," said Altamont, when the Doctor had finished reading. "There is really a great deal of humour in it, and the author of the letter ought to be a clever fellow."

"So he was," replied the Doctor; "here is a notice which is not without point:—

"'Wanted, a middle-aged, respectable woman, to assist the 'ladies of the Theatre Royal of North Georgia in their dressing-rooms. She will be paid a proper salary, with tea and beer. Apply to the Theatrical Committee. N.B.—A widow preferred.'"

"Did they meet with the widow?" asked Bell.

"We may believe so," replied the Doctor; "for here is a reply addressed to the Committee:—

"'Gentlemen, I am a widow; I am twenty-six years of age; and I can produce unquestionable references as to character and ability. But before taking charge of the actresses' wardrobes I wish to know if they intend to keep on their trousers, and if I shall be allowed the assistance of some strong, able-bodied seamen to lace their stays; in which case, gentlemen, you may depend upon your servant,

'A. B.'

'P. S.—Could not brandy be substituted for small beer?'"

"Bravo!" cried Altamont. "I think I can see these ladies' maids lacing their mistresses' stays at the capstan. Those companions of Parry were jolly fellows."

"Like all those who gain their object," observed Hatteras, who, having made this remark, had again become as silent as before. The Doctor, not wishing to dwell on this subject, hurried to read farther.

"Here," said he, "is a picture of Arctic troubles: it may be varied ad infinitum, but some of the observations are very true. Listen:—

"'Go out in the morning to get fresh air, and in putting one's foot outside the ship take a cold bath in the cook's hole.

"'Go out shooting; get near a fine reindeer, take good aim, and find your gun misses fire from damp priming.

"'Set out with a piece of soft bread in your pocket; when you feel hungry find it frozen so hard that it may break your teeth, but they cannot break it.

"'Leave the table in a hurry on hearing a wolf is passing within

'sight of the ship, and find, on returning, your dinner eaten by the 'cat.

" 'Returning from walking in profound and useful meditation, and to be suddenly roused from it by the hug of a bear.' "

" You see, my friends," the Doctor continued, " we should not have much difficulty in imagining several other Polar troubles; but from the moment it was necessary to submit to them it became a pleasure to mention them."

" Upon my word," said Altamont, " that 'Winter Chronicle' is a very amusing paper, and it is a pity we can't take it in."

" Suppose we tried to publish one," said Johnson.

" We five?" said Clawbonny: " we are hardly enough to edit it, and there would be no readers."

" Nor spectators either, if we were to try to act a play," said Altamont.

" Come, Mr. Clawbonny, tell us something about Captain Parry's theatre. Did they play original pieces?"

" No doubt they did. When they began, two volumes of plays on board the 'Hecla' were had recourse to, and they acted every fortnight; but that collection was soon exhausted, and then authors were called for and set to work. Parry himself wrote a piece for Christmas—a very applicable comedy called 'The North-west Passage; or, The End of the Voyage.' "

" A famous title," said Altamont; " but I confess if I had to write on such a topic the denouement would be very embarrassing."

" You are right," said Bell. " Who knows how it will end?"

" Why," cried the Doctor, " think about the last act, while the others have gone off well? Leave it to Providence, my friends; let us all play our parts as well as we can, and since the denouement belongs to the Author of all things, let us trust to His ability to help us out of the difficulty."

" We had better go to bed and sleep upon it," replied Johnson. " It is late, and it is time to sleep."

" You are in a great hurry, old friend," said Clawbonny.

" I can't help it, Mr. Clawbonny. I feel so comfortable in my berth; and I have a habit of dreaming about pleasant things—sometimes I dream about warm countries, so that half my life is passed under the Equator and the other under the Pole."

"You have a happy organization," said Altamont.

"As you say," replied the boatswain.

"Well," said the Doctor, "it would be cruel to keep good old Johnson waiting any longer. His tropical sun is expecting him, so let us to bed."





CHAPTER XI.

ALARMING TRACKS.

THE weather changed the night of the 26th of April, the thermometer fell, and the inhabitants of Doctor's House felt the cold getting under their blankets. Altamont, who was on duty at the stove, took care not to let the fire get low, and he was obliged to feed it well to keep the interior temperature at 50 deg. above zero. This change to cold announced the end of the storm, and the Doctor rejoiced accordingly; they could resume their usual occupations—shooting-excursions, reconnoitring the country—all that put an end to that indolent solitude during which the best tempers are occasionally soured. The next morning the Doctor rose early, and worked himself a path through heaps of ice up to the cone of the light-house. The wind had gone round to the north; the atmosphere was clear, and long white sheets of snow offered a firm carpet to the foot. They had all soon left the house; their first business was to clear it of all the masses of ice which encumbered it; they could not recognize the level space; it was impossible to discover the least vestige of a habitation; the storm had filled up and levelled all inequalities, and the surface was raised at least fifteen feet.

They first proceeded to sweep away the snow, then to restore some architectural form to the edifice—which was not difficult—and after the ice had been removed, the snow-knife soon reduced the walls to their former thickness.

After two hours' hard labour, the granite foundation appeared, and access to the stores and powder-magazine was again practicable.

But, as in these uncertain climates such a state of things might happen any day, they carried a fresh supply of provisions into

the kitchen. Their stomachs, irritated by a continuous salt-meat diet, required fresh food, and the hunters were, therefore, desirous to see what they could do to vary the system of nourishment.

The end of April brought no Polar spring with it; they had still six long weeks to wait. The rays of the sun shed, as yet, too little warmth on these snowy plains to force from the ungrateful soil the scanty production of the flora borealis. Both birds and beasts would still be scarce, though a hare, a brace of ptarmigan, and even a young fox, would have been welcomed on the dinner-table at Doctor's House, and the hunters determined to bring everything to bag which came within range of their guns.

The three companions—the Doctor, Altamont, and Bell—undertook to explore the country. To judge from his habits, Altamont ought to be a good shot and experienced hunter, though addicted to bragging; “Duke” was quite as good in his way, but less talkative. They climbed the east side of the cone, and took a line across immense white plains; but they had not far to go, for they found numerous tracks less than two miles from the fort; thence they traced them down to the shores of Victoria Bay, and they seemed to enclose Fort Providence in a circle.

After following these footmarks for some time, the hunters looked at one another.

“Well,” said the Doctor, “that seems clear enough.”

“Too clear,” replied Bell. “They are bears’ tracks.”

“Very good game,” said Altamont; “but just now there seems rather too much of it.”

“What do you mean?” asked Bell.

“I mean to say that we have here the distinct tracks of five bears, and five bears are rather too much for five men.”

“Are you sure of what you say?”

“Look, Doctor, and judge for yourself. Here is one footprint which does not resemble this other one; the claws of this are wider apart than that other’s. Look, here are the tracks of a smaller bear. Compare them well, and you will find the marks of five animals confined to a very small circle.”

“It is very evident you are right,” said Bell, who had been examining them carefully.

“Then,” said the Doctor, “we must have no rashness; but, on the contrary, we must be most careful. These animals are nearly

starving at the close of a severe winter, and they may be extremely dangerous; and as there can be no doubt as to their number——”

“Nor of their intentions,” added the American. “Do you believe they have discovered our presence here?”

“No doubt they have, unless we have come upon the vicinity of their den; but, then, why should they extend in a circle, instead of continuing straight on, till we at last lost sight of them? Look, these animals have come from the south-east, and they have stopped at this place and begun to reconnoitre the ground.”

“You are quite right,” said the Doctor; “it is clear, too, that they only came last night.”

“And other nights also,” replied Altamont, “but the snow has covered their tracks.”

“Not so,” returned Clawbonny. “It is more likely these bears have waited for the cessation of the storm, then, driven by hunger, they reached the shore of the bay with the intention of surprising seals, and then they winded us.”

“That is how it was,” said Altamont. “Besides, we can easily find out if they come again to-night.”

“How so?” asked Bell.

“By destroying their tracks in one part of their line; and if to-morrow we find fresh marks, it will be very clear that Fort Providence is their point.”

“And then,” said the Doctor, “at all events, we shall know what we have to expect.”

They set to work and soon obliterated the tracks for more than a hundred yards.”

“It is curious these beasts should have winded us from such a distance,” said Bell. “We have been burning no greasy substance to attract them.”

“Bears,” said the Doctor, “have a very piercing sight, and the finest noses possible; besides, they are extremely intelligent, if not more so than other animals, and they have evidently scented something unusual about here.”

“Besides, who knows whether they did not advance as far as the level ground during the storm?”

“Then,” replied Altamont, “why did they stop at this point last night?”

“Yes, there is no answer to that objection,” replied the Doctor,

"and we must conclude they will soon narrow their rings round Fort Providence."

"We shall soon see," said the American.

"Now let us go on, but keep our eyes open."

At last they came back half-way up the cone, after having often taken great blocks of ice for these animals, which they expected to find lying in ambuscade behind every hillock; from thence they looked in vain from Cape Washington to Johnson Island; they could see nothing. Everywhere a white motionless expanse, and not a sound to be heard, so they re-entered the snow house.

Hatteras and Johnson were informed of the state of things, and they decided on watching carefully all night; but nothing troubled its quiet splendour—nothing was heard which could signal approaching danger. The next day, at dawn, Hatteras and his companions, well armed, went to inspect the state of the snow; they found tracks identical with those of the previous evening, but nearer. It was very evident the enemy was making preparations for laying siege to Fort Providence.

"They have opened their second parallel," said the Doctor.

"They have even made a step in advance," observed Altamont.

"Look at these steps in the direction of the terrace; they belong to a powerful animal."

"Yes, these bears are gaining on us by degrees," said Johnson.

"It is quite clear they mean to attack us."

"There can be no doubt of that. We had better not show ourselves: we are not strong enough to offer them battle."

"But where are these cursed bears?" cried Bell.

"Behind some of those ice-hills to the eastward, whence they are watching us now. We must be careful how we venture out."

"And our shooting-parties?" said Altamont.

"We must put them off for a few days. We will efface the nearest tracks once more, and to-morrow morning we shall see if there are any fresh ones. In this way we shall keep well informed of the enemy's progress."

The Doctor's advice was followed, and they returned to garrison the fort; the presence of these terrible brutes put a stop to all their excursions. They watched attentively the neighbourhood of Victoria Bay. The light-house was dismantled; it was of no actual

utility, and might attract the animals' attention; the lantern and the electric wires stowed away in the house; then each took it in turn to keep a look-out on the upper level.

This enforced solitude was a fresh trouble; but how could they act otherwise? They could not risk any one of their lives in so unequal a contest, and each life was too precious to be hazarded imprudently. The bears would, perhaps, be put off their track, and if they came upon them singly during their excursions, they then might attack them with every chance of success.

This inaction, however, had a great interest to recommend it; there was something to be watched, and not one of them was sorry to be roused up a little.

The 28th of April passed without the enemy giving any signs of existence. The next time they went to examine the tracks, their curiosity gave place to astonishment. There was not a single footprint, and the surface of the snow was perfectly unbroken.

"Good," said Altamont. "The bears have lost the scent; they are tired of waiting for us, and have broken up their camp. So much the better; now we can shoot again."

"Who knows?" observed Clawbonny, "who knows? To be quite sure, I should like to keep a look-out for the bears one day longer. It is certain the enemy were not here last night, at least not on this side——"

"Let us take a turn round the level ground, and we shall then know what to think about it."

"Willingly."

They examined the ground carefully within a radius of two miles without coming across a single track.

"Well, shall we go out this morning?" asked the impatient American.

"Wait till to-morrow."

"Till to-morrow, then," said Altamont, who could scarcely restrain his impatience.

They returned to the fort. But, as on the preceding night, each man mounted guard for an hour at a time.

When Altamont's turn came, he released Bell at his post on the top of the cone. As soon as he was gone, Hatteras called his companions round him. The Doctor laid aside his note-book, and Johnson left his cooking-stove.

They thought Hatteras was going to talk to them about the danger of their position. He was not even thinking of it.

"My friends," said he, "let us take the advantage of this American's absence to discuss our own affairs: they are no business of his, and I do not wish him to interfere in them."

His audience looked at one another, not knowing what he referred to.

"I desire," he continued, "to come to some decision as to our future movements."

"Well," said the Doctor, "let us discuss them, now we are by ourselves."

"In a month," resumed Hatteras, "or in six weeks at the latest, the time will come for long expeditions to be made. Have you arrived at any conclusion what to undertake during the summer?"

"And you, Captain?" asked Johnson.

"I? I can say that not an hour of my life passes without my first idea being always before me. I take for granted not one of you has any intention of going back from the purpose with which he started——"

This insinuation met with no direct answer.

"For myself," he went on, "if I go alone to the North Pole, I intend to go; we are hardly three hundred and sixty miles from it now. No man has ever been so near this wished-for object, and I will not lose such an opportunity without having attempted everything, even the impossible. What are your own intentions in this respect?"

"Your own," replied the Doctor, promptly

"And yours, Johnson?"

"The Doctor's," replied the boatswain.

"It is your turn to speak, Bell."

"Captain," said the carpenter, "it is true we have, none of us, families expecting our return in England, but our country is, after all, our country. Do you never think of home?"

"Home!" said the Captain, "we can go home just as well after we have discovered the Pole. Even better. There will be no greater difficulty, for the higher we go the further we are from the coldest points of the globe. We have provisions and fuel for a long time yet. There is nothing to stop us, and we should be indeed guilty if we did not persevere to the end."

"Well," replied Bell, "we are all of your opinion, Captain."

"Good," said Hatteras. "I never doubted you. We shall succeed, my friends, and England shall be glorified in our success."

"But there is an American amongst us," said Johnson.

Hatteras could not conceal his irritation at that observation.

"I know it," said he, gravely.

"We cannot leave him here," said the Doctor.

"No, we cannot," mechanically replied Hatteras.

"And he will certainly come with us."

"Yes, he will come; but who is to be in command?"

"You, Captain."

"And if you obey me, will this Yankee refuse to obey me?"

"I don't think so," said Johnson. "But, still, if he refuses to place himself under your orders?"

"Then that question will have to be settled between him and me."

The three Englishmen were silent, and looked at Hatteras. The Doctor began again.

"How are we to travel?"

"By following the line of coast as far as possible?"

"But if we come upon open sea, as is very probable——?"

"We shall have to cross it."

"And how? We have no boat."

Hatteras made no answer. He was obviously embarrassed.

"Perhaps," said Bell, "we might construct a boat out of the wreck of the 'Porpoise.'"

"Never!" said Hatteras, violently.

"Never!" said Johnson.

The Doctor shook his head. He understood the Captain's repugnance.

"Never!" repeated Hatteras. "A boat built of American wood would be an American vessel!"

"But, Captain——" urged Johnson.

The Doctor made a sign to the boatswain not to press the question. It was better reserved for some more opportune moment. The Doctor, though understanding the repugnance of Hatteras, by no means shared it; and he meant to make his friend change his mind in that particular. He, therefore, changed the conversation, discussed the possibility of ascending directly north, and talked

about that unknown point on the globe which is called the North Pole. In short, he diverted it from dangerous topics, until it was abruptly brought to an end by Altamont's arrival, who had nothing to report.

The day closed thus, and the night passed quietly. The bears had evidently disappeared.





CHAPTER XII.

IMPRISONED IN ICE.

THE next day a shooting-party was to take place, in which Hatteras would join Altamont and the carpenter. No alarming tracks had been seen, and the bears had decidedly abandoned their intended attack, either from dread of these unknown enemies, or that nothing new had betrayed the existence of animated beings under that heap of snow. While the hunters were absent, the Doctor was to go as far as Johnson Island to examine the state of the ice and make some hydrographical notes. The cold was very sharp, but winter quarters had accustomed them to bear even such intensified cold. The boatswain was to remain at home and take care of the house.

The three hunters armed themselves each with a double-barrelled rifle carrying a conical ball; they took a small supply of pemmican, in case night should surprise them before their return; they also each carried a snow-knife—a most indispensable tool in these regions—and an axe in their deerskin belt.

Armed and equipped in this fashion, they might venture far and calculate on some result. They were ready at eight in the morning, and set out by climbing the hill to the east, turning the light-house cone, and came out on the plains to the southward, bounded by Bell Mount; and the Doctor, having agreed with Johnson on an alarm signal in case of danger, went down to the shore to gain the ice along Victoria Bay.

The boatswain remained alone at Fort Providence, but not idle. He first let the Greenland dogs loose, who soon betook themselves to rolling in the snow. Then Johnson occupied himself with domestic details. He had to get in provisions and fuel, set the

stores in order, mend many a broken utensil, repair the blankets which might be in a bad state, and make shoes for summer excursions. There was no want of work, and the boatswain had a sailor's facility for doing everything. While doing so, he thought over the last evening's conversation; about the Captain, and his obstinacy—very heroic and very honourable after all, in not wishing that an American, nor even an American boat, should reach the world's pole either before him or with him.

Johnson was buried in his reflection, and the hunters had left the fort about two hours, when he heard a loud, ringing report two or three miles to leeward.

"Good!" said the old sailor to himself; "they have found something, without going too far, since I can hear them so distinctly. That is because the atmosphere is so clear."

A second report, and then a third followed almost immediately.

"They must have very good sport," thought Johnson.

Three more reports, close together, and much nearer, were heard.

"Six shots!" thought Johnson; "their arms are discharged now. It has been hot work, but if by chance——"

Johnson grew pale at the idea which then came into his head; he left the house in a hurry, and clambered up the hill to the top of the cone. What he there saw made him shudder.

"The bears!" cried he.

The three hunters, followed by "Duke," were running as fast as they could, pursued by five gigantic brutes; their six shots had failed to stop them; the bears were gaining on them. Hatteras, who was behind, could only keep his distance between them and himself by throwing away his cap, his axe, and even his gun. The bears stopped, according to their custom, to smell at the object thrown down to attract them, and thus lost a little ground.

It was in this state that Hatteras, Alarnont, and Bell came up to Johnson, quite out of breath, and from the top of the bank they let themselves slip down into the snow house.

The five bears were so close to them that the Captain parried a blow from one of their paws with his knife.

In the twinkling of an eye, Hatteras and his companions had shut themselves up in the house; the brutes had stopped on the upper level spot formed by the truncated cone.

"At last," cried Hatteras; "we can defend ourselves more advantageously five to five——"

"Four to five!" exclaimed Johnson, in a terrified voice."

"What do you mean?"

"The Doctor!" said Johnson, pointing to the empty parlour.

"Well?"

"He is gone towards the island."

"We can't abandon him like this," said Altamont.

"Let us go at once," cried Hatteras.

He opened the door in a hurry, but had hardly time to close it again before a bear nearly fractured his skull by a blow from his paw.

"Here they are!" cried he.

"All of them?"

"All," replied Hatteras.

Altamont hurried to the windows and filled up the bays with ice taken from the walls of the house; his companions imitated him without speaking, and silence was only broken by "Duke's" growls. But it must be said these men had but one idea: they forgot their own danger, and only thought of the Doctor's. Poor Clawbonny!—so good, so unselfish—the soul of the little colony!—absent for the first time—very great perils, perhaps a frightful death, in store for him; for after his excursion he would come quietly home to Fort Providence and find himself in the presence of these ferocious beasts. And no means of warning him of his danger!

"Still," said Johnson, "if I am not mistaken, your repeated shots must have alarmed him, and he is sure to think something extraordinary has happened."

"But," Altamont suggested, "suppose he was some distance away, or did not understand? There are eight chances out of ten that he comes back without suspecting any danger. The bears are protected by the scarp of the fort, and he would not see them."

"Then we must get rid of these dangerous beasts before his return," said Hatteras.

"How?" asked Bell.

This was a difficult question to answer. It was out of the question to attempt a sortie. They had carefully barricaded the lobby, but the bears could easily remove these obstacles if the idea to do so

came into their heads. They knew the number and strength of their adversaries, and it would be easy for them to reach them. The prisoners were then posted in each of the rooms of Doctor's House, to repel any attempt to break in. When they listened they could hear the bears moving about and growling and scratching at the snow walls with their enormous paws. Still something must be done; there was no time to lose. Altamont determined to make a loophole and fire at their assailants; in a few minutes he had cut a hole in the wall and put his gun through; but he had hardly thrust the muzzle of the barrel out, when it was snatched out of his hands before he could pull the trigger.

"The devil!" said he; "we are not strong enough for them!" and he made haste to stop the loophole up.

This state of things had already lasted an hour, and there seemed no chance of bringing it to an end. The chances of a sortie were again discussed, but they were very weak, since the bears could not be taken separately. Still Hatteras and his companions were in a hurry to end it, and, it must be said, very much ashamed at being thus imprisoned by animals. They were about to attempt a direct attack, when Hatteras imagined a new means of defence. He took the poker which Johnson used for his stoves and thrust it into the fire. Then he made a hole in the wall without going quite through it, so as to leave externally a thin layer of ice. His companions watched him at work. When the poker was red-hot, Hatteras said:—

"This red-hot bar will keep the bears off, as they cannot lay hold of it, and through the loophole you can easily keep up your fire against them without their being able to seize your arms."

"A very good idea," said Bell, stationing himself by the side of Altamont.

Then Hatteras, snatching the poker from the fire, thrust it quickly through the wall. The snow hissed as it came in contact with it. Two bears rushed up, grappled the poker, and howled fearfully, just as four reports rapidly succeeded one another.

"Hit!" cried the American.

"Hit!" added Bell.

"Let us try again," said Hatteras, stopping up the hole for a moment.

The poker was again heated, and Altamont and Bell returned to

their places ; and Hatteras again thrust the red-hot poker through the loophole.

But this time some impenetrable surface stopped it.

"Curse them !" cried the American.

"What is it ?"

"These infernal brutes are rolling blocks upon blocks, and are shutting us up in our own house. They are actually burying us alive !"

"Impossible !"

"See, the poker cannot get through ! It is really too ridiculous."

More than ridiculous—it was becoming alarming ; their situation was getting worse. The bears, like intelligent animals, were employing these means of smothering their victims. They were heaping up the blocks of ice, so as to render flight quite impossible.

"That is hard," said Johnson, with a mortified air. "It is bad enough to be treated like this by men, let alone bears."

Two hours passed without effecting any change in the prisoners' situation ; it was utterly impossible to make a sortie, and the thickness of the walls deadened all sound from the outside. Altamont was excited, as a bold man would be finding himself in the presence of a danger his courage cannot surmount. Hatteras trembled when he thought of the Doctor, and of the serious risk he ran in returning home.

"Ah !" cried Johnson, "if Mr. Clawbonny was but here !"

"What could he do if he was ?" returned Altamont.

"He could get us out of it somehow."

"How ? I ask you again," said Altamont, angrily.

"If I knew," retorted Johnson, "I should not want him here. However, I can guess what his advice would be just at this moment."

"What ?"

"To have something to eat. That can do us no harm—on the contrary. What do you say, Mr. Altamont ?"

"Let us eat something, if you wish it," replied the latter ; "though our position is ridiculous, not to say humiliating."

"I will make a bet," cried Johnson, "that after dinner we shall discover some means of extricating ourselves."

No one answered the boatswain, and they all sat down to dinner. The prisoners began to feel very uncomfortable for want of air, now

their habitation was closed so hermetically. The atmosphere was no longer renewed through the stove-pipes, which began to draw badly; and it was clear the fire would soon go out—the oxygen, absorbed by the lungs and the stove, would soon give way to carbonic acid and its mortal effects. Hatteras was the first to mention this new danger to his companions.

“Then we must get out of this place at any price,” said Altamont.

“Yes,” replied Hatteras; “but let us wait till nightfall—then we will make a hole in the ceiling which will give us fresh air; then one of us can post himself there and fire at the bears.”

“That is our only course,” replied the American.

It was so settled. They waited for the proper moment to make the attempt, and during the hours which intervened Altamont was not sparing in his imprecations against a state of things in which, as he said “Given bears and men, the latter by no means play the leading part.”





CHAPTER XIII.

THE MINE

NIGHT came at last, and the parlour-lamp began to burn dimly in this atmosphere so deficient in oxygen.

By eight their last preparations were made. The guns were carefully loaded, and they were making the opening in the roof. They had been some minutes at work, when Johnson, leaving the sleeping-room in which he had been watching, came back in a hurry to his companions.

"What is the matter?" said the Captain; "you seem uneasy."

"Well," said the old sailor, "I am not sure, but, silence!—Can't you hear a strange noise?"

"In what direction?"

"There; in the wall of the room."

A distant noise was just audible, which seemed to come from the side wall. Someone was evidently making a hole in the ice.

"There is something scratching," said Johnson.

"No doubt of it, whatever," added Altamont.

"Can it be the bears?" asked Bell.

"It must be the bears," said Altamont; "and they have changed their tactics. They don't intend to smother us; or else they think they have done it already."

"We shall be attacked directly, and have a stand-up fight with them," replied Hatteras.

"So much the better," said Altamont. "I have had enough of invisible enemies; we shall see and fight one another now."

"But not with our guns," said Johnson; "there is no room to use them here."

"Never mind, we have our axes and knives."

The noise increased ; they could hear the scratching of claws. The bears had attacked the wall at the angle where it joined the bank of snow against the rock.

"The animal that is digging now is not more than six feet from us."

"You are right, Johnson," replied the American ; "but we have time to prepare to receive him."

The American took his axe in one hand and his knife in the other, and stood in a position to attack at any moment. Hatteras and Bell imitated him. Johnson got his gun ready, in case an opportunity should present itself for using it.

The sound grew louder ; they could hear the ice split away from the wall by the animal's claws. At last there was only a thin partition between the assailant and his adversaries ; this partition was suddenly broken through like a paper hoop when the clown jumps through it, and a big black body presented itself in the semi-obscurity of the room.

Altamont was just drawing his arm back to strike, when a well-known voice called out :

"For Heaven's sake, hold hard !"

"The Doctor ! the Doctor !" cried Johnson ; and the Doctor it was, who, carried in by his own weight, rolled into the middle of the room.

"How are you all ?" said he, getting quickly on his legs again ; while his companions stood by in astonishment, which was quickly succeeded by joy. They all wanted to shake hands with him at once. Hatteras grasped his hand for some time.

"Is it you, Mr. Clawbonny, indeed ?" said the boatswain.

"Myself, old friend, and more uneasy on your account than you could have been on mine."

"But how did you find out we were attacked by this troop of bears ?" asked Altamont ; "our greatest fear was that you would come back to Fort Providence unsuspecting there was any danger."

"I saw it all," replied the Doctor ; "your shots attracted my attention. At that moment I was close to the wreck of the 'Porpoise ;' I scrambled up on to the top of a hummock ; thence I could see the five bears in pursuit of you, and very closely too. Ah ! I was in a fright about you ! Then I was somewhat reassured when I saw you all roll down the hill and the animals hesitate to follow you for a

moment ; I felt sure you had time to barricade yourselves in the house. Then I crept on by degrees ; at last I got near the fort, crawling among the ice-blocks, till I could see these enormous beasts at work just like great beavers. They were heaping up great lumps of ice—in fact they were building you up alive. It is fortunate they never thought of rolling blocks of ice down on you from the top of the cone, or you would all have been crushed to death.”

“But,” said Bell, “you were not safe, Mr. Clawbonny. Wouldn’t they leave what they were about and come after you?”

“They never thought of it ; for the Greenland dogs, which Johnson had let loose, went very close to them several times, but they never attempted to chase them ; they thought they were sure of better game.”

“Thanks for the compliment,” said Altamont, laughing.

“Oh ! there is nothing to be proud of. When I understood what the bears’ plan was I determined to join you. I was obliged to wait till nightfall, so with the first shades of twilight, I glided to the slope by the powder-magazine. When I chose that spot I intended to have cut a gallery through it. So I set to work with my snow-knife—a most useful tool indeed. I dug away for three hours, and here I am at last, starved, exhausted, but at home again.”

“To share our fate?” said Altamont.

“To save us all, you mean ; but give me a biscuit and some meat, for I am faint for want of food.”

The Doctor soon attacked a bit of salt beef, while the others pressed him with questions.

“How are you going to save us?” asked Bell. “Are we to make our escape by the way you came, Doctor?”

“Of course, and leave the field clear for those mischievous devils to plunder our stores and destroy everything.”

“We must stay here,” said Hatteras.

“Certainly!” replied the Doctor, “and get rid of these animals notwithstanding.”

“Are there any means of doing so?” asked Bell.

“Certain and sure,” replied Clawbonny.

“I told you so,” said Johnson, rubbing his hands ; “with Mr. Clawbonny here we need never despair : he has always some plan ready in his philosopher’s bag.”

“My poor bag is nearly empty, but if I look it over well——”

"Doctor," said Altamont, "is there any danger of the bears getting in by the hole you made?"

"No; I took care to stop it up again as strong as it was before, and now we can go to the powder-magazine without their expecting us."

"Good. And now will you explain to us what means you intend to employ to rid us of these ridiculous visitors?"

"A very simple means—part of the work for which is already prepared."

"How?"

"You shall see. But I forgot I did not come here alone." So saying, the Doctor fetched in from the gallery the carcase of a newly-killed fox.

"I shot him this morning; and there never yet was a fox killed more opportunely."

"But what is your plan?" asked Altamont.

"My plan is to blow up all five bears together with about a hundred pounds of powder."

"Where is the powder?"

"In the magazine. This passage leads to it. This was my reason for making a gallery sixty feet long. I might have attacked the parapet nearer the house, but I had my own idea about it."

"And where do you mean to make your mine?"

"Just opposite the slope, at the point the most distant from the house, the powder-magazine, and the storehouses."

"But how will you attract all the bears there together?"

"I will undertake that," replied the Doctor. "Now we have talked enough about it; we must act. We have got to dig a passage a hundred feet long during the night; it will be hard work, but five of us can do it, by relieving one another in turns. Bell shall begin, and, in the meantime, we shall be able to rest ourselves."

The Doctor crept into the dark gallery, followed by Bell. Where the Doctor could pass, his companions were sure to find themselves at their ease. The two miners reached the powder-magazine, when the Doctor gave Bell the necessary instructions: the carpenter set to work at the opposite wall, and the Doctor returned to the house.

Bell worked away for an hour, and dug a passage about ten feet long, along which a man could creep on his belly. Altamont then took his place, and accomplished about the same distance. The

snow was carried into the kitchen and melted, as it thus took up less room.

The Captain succeeded the American, then Johnson. About eight in the morning the gallery was finished.

By the first light of dawn the Doctor went to look at the bears by a loophole he had made in the powder-magazine. These patient animals had not quitted the place. There they were, going and coming, and growling, but mounting guard with exemplary perseverance; they prowled about the house, which was almost lost amidst the blocks of ice they had heaped up against it. But a moment came when they seemed to have exhausted their patience, for the Doctor noticed them suddenly begin to thrust back the blocks of ice they had been piling up.

"So much the better," said he to the Captain, who was close to him; "they seem to me to intend to undo their work and try to get at us. But wait a moment; we shall get at them first."

The Doctor slipped to the point where the mine was to be established; there he enlarged the chamber to the width and height of the slope; there was only about a foot of ice left above, which they supported, to prevent its falling in.

A strong stake was fixed in the ground; the fox's carcass was tied to the top of it, and a long cord went along the gallery to the powder-magazine.

The Doctor's companions obeyed his instructions, though they did not exactly understand them.

"Here is the bait," said he, pointing to the fox.

He then made them roll a barrel, containing about a hundred pounds of powder, to the foot of the stake. "There is the mine," he added.

"But," objected Hatteras, "we shall blow ourselves up as well as the bears."

"No; we shall be far enough off from the scene of the explosion. The house is strong enough; and should it be a little shaken, we can easily repair it."

"And now," said Altamont, "how are you going to operate?"

"By hauling in this rope, we shall pull down the post which supports the layer of ice above the mine; the fox's carcass will then be suddenly visible above the slope; and you will grant me that these

hungry beasts, after their long fast, will not require much inducement to spring upon this unexpected prey."

"I quite agree with you."

"Then, just at that moment, I spring the mine, and blow up bears and fox."

"Bravo!" said Johnson, who was attentively listening to the conversation.

Hatteras had such confidence in his friend that he required no explanation; he only waited the result. But Altamont wanted to know every particular.

"Doctor," said he, "how much time do you give the fuse to burn to regulate the exact moment of the explosion?"

"It is very simple," replied the Doctor. "I have not calculated it at all."

"Is your fuse, then, a hundred feet long?"

"No."

"Then I suppose you only lay a train?"

"No; it might miss fire."

"Then must some one sacrifice himself to spring the mine?"

"If a volunteer is wanted," said Johnson, readily, "I offer myself."

"Unnecessary, my worthy old friend," said the Doctor, offering his hand to the boatswain, "The lives of us all are too precious, and, thank God! they will be spared."

"Then, Doctor," said the American, "I give it up."

"Look here!" said the Doctor, smiling. "If one could not get out of this difficulty just now, of what use would science be to us? Have we not an electric battery here, and a sufficient length of wire, which we used for the lighthouse?"

"Well?"

"Well, we shall spring the mine at any moment we like, without the slightest danger."

"Hurrah!" cried Johnson; and "Hurrah!" was echoed by his companions, without troubling themselves to think whether their enemies heard them.

The electric wires were immediately carried from the house, along the gallery, to the mine. One end was attached to the battery, and the other inserted in the barrel, the two ends remaining placed a small distance from each other.

All was finished by nine in the morning—just in time ; for the bears had been working hard at their labours of destruction.

The Doctor judged the moment was come. Johnson was stationed in the powder-magazine, with instructions to haul in the rope attached to the post at a signal given.

“ Now,” said the Doctor, “ have your arms ready (in case the besiegers are not killed at the first explosion) and go and stand near Johnson ; as soon as the mine is sprung, rush out upon them.”

“ All right,” said the American.

Hatteras, Altamont, and Bell went towards the powder-magazine, the Doctor remained at the battery.

He soon heard Johnson’s voice in the distance, calling—“ Look out.”

“ All right ! ” he answered.

Johnson gave a strong pull at the rope, which gave way, bringing down the post ; then he ran to the loophole and looked out. The surface of the slope had sunk down, and the fox’s carcass appeared above the broken ice. The bears were, at first, surprised, and then sprang, all together, at this unexpected prey.

“ Fire ! ” cried Johnson.

The Doctor sent the electric spark along the wires. A tremendous explosion was the result. The house shook as if an earthquake had just taken place, and the walls cracked. Hatteras, Altamont, and Bell, rushed out of the magazine, ready for action.

But their arms were not required. Four out of the five bears were blown to pieces, while the last made his escape in a half-roasted state.

“ Hurrah ! hurrah ! ” cried Clawbonny’s companions, as they rushed up to him, and overwhelmed him with their congratulations.





CHAPTER XIV.

THE POLAR SPRING.

THE prisoners were set free; and their joy was shown by the earnestness of their thanks to the Doctor. Old Johnson rather regretted the bears' skins, which were burned, and unfit for use; but his regret did not influence his good-humour.

The day was spent in repairing the snow house, which had suffered considerably from the explosion. They cleared away the ice-blocks the bears had rolled against it, and its walls were cemented again at the angles. The boatswain's whistle helped the work along cheerily.

The next day the thermometer, with a change in the wind, went up to 15 deg. above zero. Men and things quickly felt the effects of such a change; and the southerly breeze brought with it the first indications of Polar spring. This comparative warmth lasted several days. The thermometer, out of the wind, stood at 31 deg. above zero, and symptoms of a thaw were apparent.

The ice began to split, salt water began to show itself on the surface, and, a few days afterwards, it rained heavily.

A thick vapour rose from the snow—which was a good omen; and these immense masses seemed, at last, about to melt away.

There was more colour in the sun's disc, and its rays extended farther along the horizon; and night hardly lasted three hours.

A not less significant symptom was the return of flocks of northern geese, plovers, and ptarmigans; the air seemed to fill by degrees with those deafening cries which the navigators of the previous spring had not forgotten. Hares, several of which they shot, showed themselves along the shores of the bay, as also the Arctic mouse, whose little burrows form a system of regular cells.

The Doctor made his friends observe the fact, that nearly every

animal began to exchange the white feathers, or fur of winter, for their summer clothing. This spring effect was daily perceptible among them; while Nature allowed them food in the shape of mosses, poppies, saxifrage, and stunted grass to boot—a fresh creation was thrusting itself through the melting snow.

But these inoffensive animals brought their hungry enemies with them: foxes and wolves came in search of prey; their dismal howling could be heard in the brief obscurity of the night.

The wolf of these regions is a very near relative of the dog; like him, he barks, and often in a manner to deceive the most practised ear—even that of the dog himself. For instance: it is said these animals employ this trick to attract the dogs, and then devour them. This fact was noticed on the shores of Hudson's Bay; and the Doctor could prove that the same thing occurred at New America. Johnson was very careful not to let his dogs run loose, or they would have been caught in that manner.

As for "Duke," he knew all about it, and was too sharp to fall into the jaws of the wolf.

They shot a good deal for about a fortnight. They had an ample supply of fresh meat, partridges, ptarmigan, and snow buntings, which furnished them with a delicious change of food. But they did not go far from Fort Providence. Small game seemed almost to court the gun; it gave animation, by its presence, to these silent shores; and Victoria Bay wore an unaccustomed aspect, which rejoiced the eyes.

The fortnight succeeding the Battle of the Bears was occupied in divers ways. The thaw was making visible progress. The thermometer rose to 32 deg. above zero; torrents began to roar in their course down the ravines, and thousands of cataracts rushed down the sides of the hills.

The Doctor had cleared about an acre of ground, and sowed cress, sorrel, and scurvy grass, which is excellent as an anti-scorbutic; he could just distinguish the tiny green leaves coming up through the ground, when all of a sudden, without any warning, the frost set in again as hard as ever.

In one single night, during a strong breeze from the north, the thermometer fell nearly 40 deg. Everything was frozen: birds, quadrupeds, amphibious animals—all disappeared as by enchantment. The seals' blow-holes closed up; cracks disappeared; the

ice became as hard as granite again; and the cascades, caught as they fell, hung in long icicles down the face of the cliffs. It was like a change of scene at a theatre, and occurred the night of the 11th of May. And when Bell, the next morning, put his nose out of doors, he nearly left it behind him.

"O, Northern Nature!" cried the Doctor, a little disappointed, "this is one of your tricks. Well, I shall only have to sow all my seeds over again."

Hatteras took it less philosophically, he was so anxious to recommence his research; but he could only wait patiently.

"Are we likely to have this cold for any length of time?" asked Johnson.

"No, my friend; no," answered Clawbonny; "this is winter's last blow. You must know, he is at home here; and he can hardly be turned out without resisting it."

"He resists it well, too," said Bell, rubbing his face

"Yes; but I ought to have expected it, and not wasted my seeds like a fool; besides, if I had thought of it, I could have made them grow near the stoves in the kitchen."

"But do you mean to say," said Altamont, "you might have anticipated this change?"

"Certainly; and without being taken for a conjuror. I ought to have dedicated my seeds to Saint Mamert, Saint Paneratus, and Saint Jervais, whose days are the 11th, 12th, and 13th of this month."

"I suppose you will next tell me, Doctor, that the three saints in question have great influence over the temperature?"

"Very great, if you believe the gardeners, who call them the three frost saints, because there is generally a period of frost in May, and the temperature is generally lower from the 11th to the 13th; that is a fact."

The Doctor was right. For one reason or another, the cold was very intense the rest of May; they could not shoot—not so much from the severity of the cold as because there was no game. Fortunately, their store of fresh meat was not nearly exhausted. They were thus condemned to fresh inactivity. For a fortnight—from the 11th to the 25th of May—their monotonous existence was passed without a break, with the exception of an attack of diphtheria, which took the carpenter quite suddenly. The Doctor saw, from his swelled

tonsils and the false membrane which covered them, what was the nature of this terrible complaint. Fortunately, there he was in his element; and the attack was promptly checked. The treatment Bell followed was very simple; the drug was close at hand. The Doctor merely put small bits of ice in the patient's mouth; in a few hours the swelling began to diminish, and the false membrane disappeared. Four-and-twenty hours afterwards, Bell was on his legs again.

As everyone was admiring the Doctor's treatment——

"This," said he, "is the country for attacks of the throat. It is quite right the remedy should be close at hand."

"The remedy and the Doctor, too," added Johnson, in whose estimation the Doctor was assuming gigantic proportions.

During these fresh hours of idleness Clawbonny resolved to have some serious conversation with Hatteras; the question was to induce Hatteras to change his idea of turning northward, without taking a boat with him, to get across some arm of the sea, or intervening strait. The Captain, so positive in his intentions, had formally declared he would not avail himself of any craft built out of the wreck of the American ship.

The Doctor was at a loss how to begin; and yet it was all-important the question should be settled, for June would soon be there, and with it the seasons for making long expeditions. At last, after reflecting for a long time, he took Hatteras aside, and, with his usual good feeling, he thus addressed him:—

"Hatteras, do you believe I am your sincere friend?"

"Certainly," replied the Captain, promptly; "my best, almost my only one."

"If I give you advice," continued the Doctor, "advice unasked for by you, will you consider it as disinterested on my part?"

"Yes; for I know you are not guided by personal interest. But what are you driving at now?"

"Wait a moment; I have one more question to put to you: Do you believe I am as good an Englishman as you are, and as ambitious of contributing to the glory of my country as you are?"

Hatteras looked with surprise at the Doctor.

"Yes, I do," said he at last.

"You want to reach the North Pole. I understand your ambition to do so, and I share it; but, to carry out this design, we want the

necessary means. Now, Hatteras, you have sacrificed a great deal to do so, but not everything—you have not sacrificed your personal antipathies; and, at this moment, you are ready to refuse the most indispensable means of reaching the Pole.”

“Ah!” replied Hatteras; “you mean that man’s boat.”

“Look here, Hatteras: we must discuss this question coolly, in all its bearings. The Coast on which we are wintering now may break off abruptly; there is nothing to prove that it extends six degrees northward. If the information which has brought us thus far is correct, we must expect to find, during the summer months, a vast extent of open sea. Now, with the Polar Ocean before us, clear of ice, and its navigation easy, what are we to do, if we want the means of crossing it?”

Hatteras did not answer.

“Would you like to find yourself a few miles from the Pole, without being able to reach it?”

Hatteras let his head fall on his hands.

“And now,” continued the Doctor, “let us look at it from a moral point of view. I can understand an Englishman sacrificing his fortune and his existence to add to England’s glory; but if a boat made of a few planks torn from an American ship—a worthless wreck—touches a new coast, or crosses an unknown ocean, how can that diminish the honour of the discovery? If you yourself had found an abandoned hulk on this very beach, would you for a moment hesitate to make use of it? Does not the benefit of the discovery belong to the head of the expedition? And let me ask you—if this boat, built by four Englishmen, and manned by four Englishmen, will not be English from keel to bulwark?”

Hatteras still remained silent.

“No,” said Clawbonny. “Be frank. It is not the boat, but the man you detest.”

“Yes Doctor—yes, I hate that American; he is a man Fate has thrown across my path——”

“To save you!”

“To ruin me! It irritates me to hear him talk as if he was master here. He seems to think he holds my fate in his hands, and to see through all my projects. Has he not unmasked himself completely, when the question was raised of naming these new countries? Has he ever told us what he came to these latitudes for? You will never

get the idea out of my head that this man is the head of an expedition sent out by the United States Government on a voyage of discovery ; and that it is which is killing me."

"And if that be the case, Hatteras, what is there to prove this expedition is to discover the North Pole? Has not America as much right to try and discover a North-west Passage as England? It is certain Altamont is entirely ignorant of your plans; for neither Johnson, Bell, nor myself have ever spoken of them before him."

"Well, then, let him always remain in ignorance."

"He must know them at last; for we cannot leave him alone here."

"Why not?" asked the Captain, angrily. "Can't he remain at Fort Providence?"

"He would not consent to it; and, besides, it would be worse than imprudent—it would be inhuman to abandon that man here, when it would be uncertain if we found him here on our return. Altamont will come—he must come—with us. But as it is of no use inspiring him with ideas which he has not at present, we will tell him nothing, and we will set to work about a boat, apparently intended to survey these newly-discovered coasts."

Hatteras could not make up his mind to adopt his friend's suggestions; the latter expected an answer, but none came.

"And if this man declines to allow us to break up his vessel?" said the Captain, at last.

"In that case, you have might on your side. You would build the boat in spite of him, and he would have no longer any right to our consideration."

"I trust to Heaven he will refuse," cried Hatteras.

"He must be asked first; and I will take upon myself to do so," replied Clawbonny.

That very evening, at supper, the Doctor turned the conversation on certain projected excursions for the summer months, with the intention of making a hydrographical survey of the coast.

"I hope, Altamont," said he, "you will join us."

"Certainly," replied the American; "we must know how far this New America extends."

Hatteras watched anxiously his rival while he said this.

"And to do that," continued Altamont, "we must turn the wreck of the 'Porpoise' to the best account; so let us build ourselves a good strong boat which can keep the sea."

"You hear, Bell," said the Doctor, quickly. "We will set about it to-morrow."





CHAPTER XV.

THE NORTH-WEST PASSAGE.

THE next day Bell, Altamont, and the Doctor went off to the "Porpoise." There was no want of materials, for the ship's long-boat, though stove in by the blocks of ice, would still supply them with some of the timbers for the new one. The carpenter immediately set to work. They required a boat capable of keeping the sea, and yet light enough to be carried on a sledge.

The first days in May the temperature rose again; the thermometer stood at freezing. Spring began to return for good this time, and the men laid aside their winter clothes. There was much rain, and the snow took advantage of all the declivities of the ground to fall in cascades.

Hatteras could not contain his satisfaction at seeing the ice-fields give the first sign of thaw. Open sea was liberty for him.

Whether his predecessors were deceived or not on this great question of the Polar basin was the one great question he hoped shortly to solve. On it depended entirely the success of his enterprise.

One evening, after a tolerably warm day, during which the break-up of the ice was very manifest, he turned the subject of conversation on the interesting topic of an open sea.

He went over again the series of arguments which was so familiar to him, and found, as he always did, in the Doctor, a warm advocate; besides, there was no want of truth in his conclusions.

"It is clear," said he, "that if the ocean gets rid of its ice opposite Victoria Bay, its southern part must be also free as far as New Cornwall, probably up to the Queen's Channel. Penny and Belcher saw it so, and they certainly had a good view of it."

"I believe as you do, Hatteras," said the Doctor, "and nothing

could authorize anyone to question these brave sailors' accuracy. Attempts were fruitlessly made to attribute their discovery to an effect of mirage, but they were too positive not to be certain of the fact."

"I have always thought so too," said Altamont, speaking for the first time. "The Polar basin extends not only westward, but eastward also."

"We may certainly suppose so," said Hatteras.

"We must suppose so," continued Altamont, "for the open sea which Captains Penny and Belcher saw near the coast of Grinnel Land, Kane's lieutenant, Morton, also saw in the strait which bears that bold adventurer's name."

"We are not in Kane Sea," drily returned Hatteras, "so we cannot verify the fact."

"It is very probable, for all that," said the American.

"Certainly," responded the Doctor, anxious to avoid all useless discussion. "What Altamont thinks, ought to be the case, unless certain the land offered the same peculiar dispositions under different latitudes. I therefore come to the conclusion that the sea is open alike westward and eastward."

"Under any circumstances, it does not matter much to us," said Hatteras.

"I do not think as you do, Hatteras," said the American, who began to be annoyed at the Captain's affected indifference. "That may matter to us very considerably?"

"And when, may I ask?"

"When we begin to think about returning."

"Returning? Who talks of returning?"

"No one," replied Altamont; "but I suppose we shall stop somewhere."

"Where?" said Hatteras.

This was the first time the American was asked the question directly. The Doctor would have given one of his arms to put a stop to the discussion."

As Altamont made no answer, Hatteras repeated the question.

"Where we are going," replied the American, coolly.

"And where is that?" said the Doctor in a conciliating manner.

"I mean to say, then," continued Altamont, "that if we want to

profit by the Polar basin to return, we can try to reach Kane's sea; it will take us more directly into Baffin's Bay."

"You think so?" said the Captain, ironically.

"I think so, as I think if ever these northern seas become practicable, we shall go there the most direct way. Doctor Kane's discovery was a most valuable one."

"Indeed!" said Hatteras, biting his lips till the blood came.

"Yes," said the Doctor; "it cannot be denied, and we must give every man the credit he deserves."

"For, before this celebrated sailor," continued the obstinate American, "no one ever got so far north."

"I am inclined to think now that the English have got beyond him."

"And the Americans!" said Altamont.

"The Americans?" replied Hatteras.

"What am I, then?" said Altamont, proudly.

"You?" said Hatteras, scarcely able to speak. "You are a man who pretends to set merit and chance on the same level. Your American captain did get a long way towards the north, but it was only chance——"

"Chance?" cried Altamont. "Do you dare to assert that Kane did not owe this great discovery to his energy and his knowledge?"

"And I say," retorted Hatteras, "that the name of Kane is not to be mentioned in a country famous for its Parry's, its Franklins, its Ross's, Belchers, and Penny's, or in seas which gave up the North-west Passage to McClure——"

"McClure!" returned the American, hastily; "you quote that man, and you raise him beyond the credit of chance discovery. Why, it was chance alone which favoured him."

"No," replied Hatteras, with animation. "No; it was his courage, his perseverance, in remaining four winters among the ice."

"I believe he did," said Altamont; "he was caught in the ice, and could not get back; and he was obliged to abandon his vessel, the 'Investigator,' to return to England."

"My friends," said the Doctor——

"Besides," continued Altamont, interrupting him, "let us drop the individual, and look at the result. You talk of the North-west Passage; that passage is yet to be discovered."

Hatteras jumped off his seat at that observation—the most irritating question that ever arose between two national rivalries.

The Doctor again tried to interfere.

“You are wrong, Altamont,” said he.

“No, I am not. I repeat my observation,” replied the obstinate Yankee. “The North-west Passage is yet to be found; or, if you like it better, to be made. McClure has not done so; and never yet has a vessel left Behring’s Straits and arrived in Baffin’s Bay.”

It was a fact, as the American had stated it. What could be said against it?

Hatteras, however, rose and said:—

“I will not allow the ‘glory of an English Captain to be any longer impugned in my presence.”

“You will not allow it?” said Altamont, also rising; “but facts are there, and you have not the power of removing them.”

“Sir!” said Hatteras, pale with anger.

“My friends,” said the Doctor, “we are discussing a scientific question.”

“I will tell you what the facts really are,” cried Hatteras, who was now incapable of listening to anyone.

“And I will say what I have to say also,” retorted Altamont.

Johnson and Bell did not know what to say, or what to do.

“Gentlemen,” cried the Doctor, “allow me to say a word—I will do so. I know the facts as well, nay, better than you do; and you will allow that I can speak of them impartially.”

“Yes, yes,” said Bell and Johnson together, who were becoming uneasy at the turn the discussion was taking, and so formed a majority in the Doctor’s favour.

“Go on, Mr. Clawbonny,” said Johnson; “these gentlemen will listen to you.”

“Say on, then,” said Altamont.

Hatteras nodded acquiescence, and resumed his seat.

“I will tell you the story in all its integrity,” said the Doctor; “and I am open to your correction if I omit or alter a single circumstance. Here is the chart of the Polar seas,” said the Doctor, who had got up to fetch the necessary documents. “It will be very easy, to follow McClure’s course and then you can judge for yourselves.”

The Doctor laid out on the table one of those excellent charts

published by order of the Admiralty, containing the most modern discoveries made in the Arctic regions ; then he continued in these terms :—

“ In 1848, as you are aware, two ships—the ‘Herald,’ Captain Kellet, and the ‘Plover,’ Captain Moore, were despatched to Behring’s Straits, to find traces of Franklin. Their researches were fruitless. In 1850 they were joined by McClure, who commanded the ‘Investigator,’ in which he had made the expedition of 1849, under the orders of Sir James Ross. He was followed by Captain Collinson, his superior officer, on board the ‘Enterprise,’ but he got the start of him ; and when he arrived at Behring’s Straits, he declared he would wait no longer, but would set out alone on his own responsibility ; and—you hear me, Altamont—that he would either discover Franklin or the North-west Passage.”

Altamont betrayed neither approbation nor the reverse

“ On the 5th of August, 1850,” continued Clawbonny, “ after having spoken the ‘Plover,’ for the last time, McClure steered for the eastern sea by a route almost unknown. You see, hardly any land is set down on this chart. On the 30th of August he sighted Cape Bathurst ; the 6th of September he discovered Baring’s Land, which he afterwards ascertained to form part of Banks Land—then Prince Albert Land ; then he boldly ascended the long strait which separates these two large islands, and which he named Prince of Wales Strait. Just accompany the courageous navigator for a time. He hoped to come out into Melville Bay, which we have just crossed ; and he had good reason for so hoping ; but the ice at the end of the strait stopped his farther progress. Thus McClure was obliged to winter out in 1850 ; and during that time he crossed the ice to make sure the strait communicated with Melville Bay.”

“ Just so,” said Altamont ; “ but he did not cross it.”

“ Wait,” said the Doctor. “ While they were wintering there, McClure’s officers visited the neighbouring coasts—Creswell, Baring’s Land ; Haswell, the southern part of Prince Albert Land ; and Wynniatt, Cape Walker, to the north. With the first thaw in July McClure made a second attempt to get the ‘Investigator’ into Melville Bay. He was within twenty miles of it—only twenty miles !—but the wind drove him to the southward, without allowing him to succeed in passing through. He then decided on descending Prince of Wales Strait, and on coasting along Banks Land, to try

and get by the west what he could not by the east. He put his ship about; the 18th he sighted Cape Kellet, and the 19th Cape Prince Alfred, two degrees higher; then, after a long and wearisome struggle against icebergs, he remained frozen up in Banks Strait, at the entrance of that series of straits leading into Baffin's Bay."

"But he could not get through them," observed Altamont.

"Wait a little longer, and have as much patience as McClure. On the 26th of September he took up his winter quarters in Mercy Bay, to the northward of Banks Land, and remained there until 1852. April arrives; McClure had only eighteen months' provisions left; still he refused to return. He set out, crossed Banks Strait in a sledge, and reached Melville Island. Let us follow him on the chart. He hoped to find on this coast the vessels belonging to Commander Austin's expedition, sent to meet him by Baffin's Bay and Lancaster Sound. On the 28th of April he reached Winter Harbour, at the very spot where Parry had wintered thirty-three years before; but no ships. But he discovered a cairn, by which he learns that McClintock, Austin's lieutenant, had passed there the preceding year, and gone away again. Anyone else would have despaired. McClure never despaired. He deposited another document in the cairn, in which he announced his intention of returning to England by the North-west Passage, which he had discovered by gaining Lancaster Sound and Baffin's Bay. If nothing more is heard of him, it will be because he has been to the northward or westward of Melville Island. Then he returned, still full of courage, to Mercy Bay, to pass a third winter, from 1852 to 1853.

"I never questioned his courage for a moment," said Altamont, "only his success."

"Let us follow him a little longer," replied the Doctor. "In March, reduced to two-thirds rations, in consequence of the severity of the winter and the scarcity of game, McClure determined to send half his crew back to England, either by Baffin's Bay, or by the river Mackenzie and Hudson's Bay; the other half was to take the 'Investigator' back to Europe. He selected the men the least able to support a fourth winter; everything was fixed for their departure on the 15th of April; but on the 6th, when walking on the ice with Lieutenant Creswell, McClure made out someone coming from a northerly direction, and making signals—a man, which man turned out to be Lieutenant Price, of the 'Herald'—that same Cap-

tain Kellet's lieutenant whom he had left two years before in Behring's Straits, as I told you at the beginning of this account. Kellet having reached Winter Harbour, had found the document which McClure had left on the chance of its being found. Having learned his position in Mercy Bay, he sent his lieutenant, Price, to meet the bold Captain. The lieutenant was followed by a detachment of sailors from the 'Herald,' among whom was a M. de Bray, a French naval officer, who was serving as a volunteer with Captain Kellet. You do not question the truth of this meeting of my countrymen?"

"By no means," cried Altamont.

"Well, then, observe what happens afterwards, and if this North-west Passage has been really discovered. You must observe that if Parry's discoveries are connected with those of McClure, it will be found the northern coasts of America have been travelled round."

"Not by a single vessel," replied Altamont.

"No; but by one man. Let us get on. McClure went to see Captain Kellet at Melville Island; in twelve days he travelled over the hundred and seventy miles which separate Mercy Bay from Winter Harbour. He agreed with the Commander of the 'Herald' to send him his invalids, and returned on board. Others would have thought they had done enough, but this intrepid young man desired to try his fortune again. Then—and it is to this I wish to call your attention—then his lieutenant, Creswell, taking charge of the 'Investigator's' invalids, left Mercy Bay, arrived at Winter Harbour; thence, after a journey of four hundred and seventy miles across the ice, he reached Beechey Island the 2nd of June, and, a few days afterwards, with twelve of his men, took his passage home in the 'Phoenix.'"

"On board which I was then serving with Captain Inglefield, and we returned to England," said Johnson.

"And the 7th of October following," resumed the Doctor, "Creswell arrived in London, after having gone the whole distance included between Behring's Straits and Cape Farewell."

"Well," said Hatteras, "arriving at one side and going out by the other—that means 'passing,' does it not?"

"Yes," replied Altamont; "but by travelling four hundred and seventy miles across the ice."

"What does that matter?"

"Everything," retorted Altamont. "Did McClure's vessel make the passage?"

"No," replied Clawbonny, "for he was obliged to abandon her in the ice the fourth winter."

"Well, in a sea voyage it is the business of the vessel, and not the man, to succeed. If the North-west Passage ever becomes practicable, it must be for ships, and not for sledges. A ship therefore—or, in default of a ship, a boat—must accomplish this voyage."

"A boat!" cried Hatteras, who understood the American's evident allusion.

"Altamont," said the Doctor, hastily, "you make a childish distinction in this respect, and we all say you are wrong."

"That may be very easy for you, gentlemen," said the American; "you are four to one. But that will not prevent my keeping to my own opinion."

"Keep it to yourself, then," cried Hatteras, "and let us hear no more about it."

"What right have you to speak to me in that manner?" asked the American, furiously.

"My right as Captain," returned Hatteras.

"Am I, then, under your orders?" retorted Altamont.

"Without doubt you are; and woe be to you if —"

The Doctor, Johnson, and Bell here interposed. It was time they did: the two enemies were measuring one another by the eye. The Doctor's heart began to beat.

However, after a few conciliatory words, Altamont went to bed, whistling "Yankee Doodle;" and, whether he slept or not, he never said another word.

Hatteras left the house and walked up and down for about an hour, and then he also retired to bed without speaking.





CHAPTER XVI.

THE NORTHERN ARCADIA.

THE 29th of May, for the first time, the sun did not set ; his disc just touched the horizon, and rose again almost immediately, thus getting to days of twenty-four hours again. The next day he appeared surrounded by a magnificent halo—a luminous circle brilliant with all the prismatic colours. The frequent appearance of these phenomena attracted the Doctor's attention ; he never omitted to set down their date, dimensions, and appearance. The one he observed on that day displayed in its elliptical shape a form hitherto little known.

Whole tribes of screaming birds soon returned ; troops of bustards and Canada geese, coming from the distant regions of the Floridas and Arkansas, flying northward and bringing spring back under their wings. The Doctor shot some of them, and also three or four early cranes, and one solitary stork.

The snow, however, was thawing in all directions, under the influence of the sun ; the salt water lying about on the ice-fields accelerated its decomposition. Mixed with salt water, the ice formed a sort of salted paste which Arctic navigators call "slush." Large ponds formed on the land near the bay, and the soil, freed from ice, seemed to grow like a production of the northern spring.

The Doctor turned his attention to his planting operations. He sowed cress over again, which three weeks before had already appeared above ground. The heaths also began to show their little pale pink flowers. Altogether, the flora of New America left something to be desired ; but this vegetation, rare and timid as it was, gave them great pleasure to see. It was all the feeble rays of the sun could do—a sort of last pledge that Providence had not entirely

forgotten these far-off regions. At last it began to be really warm. On the 15th of June the Doctor set down that the thermometer was at 57 deg. above zero : he could hardly believe his eyes, but he was obliged to yield to proof. The face of the country was quite changed ; innumerable cascades roared as they poured down from the heights under the influence of the sun ; the ice was breaking up, and the great question of open sea would soon be decided. The air was filled with the report of avalanches hurled down from the hill-tops into the ravines below, and the crashing of the ice-floes, when they were forced together, produced a deafening noise.

Hatteras, in his walks, had carefully surveyed the land as far as beyond Cape Washington ; the melting of the snow made a sensible difference in the appearance of the country, and ravines and hill-sides were now visible where a vast white winter carpet seemed to cover one uniform plain.

The house and the magazines threatened dissolution, and it was necessary to repair them ; fortunately, a temperature of 57 deg. is rare in these regions, and its mean point is very little above freezing.

About the 15th of June the boat was already far advanced. While Bell and Johnson worked at it, several shooting-parties were arranged which were very successful. They managed to shoot some reindeer. These animals are very difficult of approach : but Altamont adopted the method of the American Indians—he crept along the ground, and holding his gun and his arms so as to represent the horns of one of these timid animals, he contrived to get within shot of them. But the most famous game, the musk-oxen, of which Parry found many herds on Melville Island, did not seem to frequent the shores of Victoria Bay. They, therefore, planned a lengthened excursion, both for the sake of hunting this valuable animal and of reconnoitring the land to the eastward. It did not form part of Hatteras's plan to go northward by this part of the continent ; but the Doctor was not sorry to obtain a general idea of the country ; so they decided to make a point to the east of Fort Providence. Altamont's object was to hunt. "Duke" was, of course, of the party.

On Monday, then, the 17th of June, the thermometer indicating 41 deg., with a quiet and clear atmosphere, the three hunters, each with his double-barrelled gun, his axe, and his snow-knife, and followed by "Duke," left Doctor's House at six in the morning.

They were equipped for a journey which might take them three or four days, and they took a corresponding supply of provisions with them.

At eight in the morning Hatteras and his companions had gone a distance of about seven miles. Nothing living had as yet offered them a shot, and their hunting-party threatened to become a mere excursion.

This new country was covered with extensive plains as far as one could see; rivulets born of yesterday were flowing through it in great numbers, and vast pools, motionless ponds, glittered under the slanting rays of the sun. The layers of ice just dissolved showed a soil belonging to the great division of sedimentary earths due to the action of water, so largely spread over the surface of the globe.

They saw a few erratic blocks, of a nature perfectly distinct from the soil on which they were lying, and whose presence it was difficult to explain; but slaty schists and the various productions of limestone soil were met with in abundance, and especially some curious crystals, transparent and colourless, and possessing the same refraction peculiar to Iceland spar. But though he was not hunting, the Doctor had no time for geology; he could follow reveries as he hurried along, for his companions walked very fast. He talked, however, as much as he could, for without him absolute silence would have reigned among them. Altamont had not the least wish to speak to the Captain, who had no desire to answer him if he had done so.

About ten the hunters had advanced a dozen miles to the east; the sea was disappearing under the horizon. The Doctor proposed they should halt and breakfast. This meal they took hastily, and in half-an-hour they set forward again.

The ground then sloped down gradually; certain patches of snow, still remaining, either from their situation or protected by the declivity of the rocks, gave it a woolly appearance; it was like waves curling along in the open sea before a strong breeze. The country still presented nothing but plains without vegetation, which no living creature seemed ever to have frequented.

"Decidedly," said Altamont to the Doctor; "we are not lucky when we go out hunting. I acknowledge the country offers very little inducement to animals, but the game in northern regions has

no right to be very particular, and it might have been a little more obliging."

"We must not despair yet," replied the Doctor. "Summer has hardly yet begun, and if Parry fell in with so many animals at Melville Island, there is no reason why we should not find some here."

"But we are more to the north," said Hatteras.

"No doubt; but the north is but a word in this question: it is the Frozen Pole we must consider; that is to say, that icy immensity in which we wintered in the 'Forward.' Now, in proportion as we rise, we are leaving the coldest part of the globe, and we ought therefore to find beyond it what Parry, Ross, and other navigators found below it."

"Well!" said Altamont, with a sigh of regret, "hitherto we have only been travellers, not hunters!"

"Patience," replied the Doctor; "the country seems to change a little, and I shall be very much astonished if we don't find game in the ravines where vegetation has begun to show itself."

"It must be confessed," replied the American, "we are crossing a country both uninhabited and uninhabitable."

"Uninhabitable is a strong expression," returned the Doctor; "I don't believe in uninhabitable countries. Man, by dint of sacrifices, and employing generation after generation with all the resources of agriculture, would finish by fertilizing such a country as this."

"Do you think so?" said Altamont.

"Yes, I do. If you were to visit the countries celebrated in the early days of the world—places where Thebes, Nineveh, or Babylon existed in our ancestors' fertile valleys—it would seem to you impossible that man could ever have existed there; even the atmosphere there is vitiated since the human race has withdrawn from them. It is a general law of nature which renders countries in which no one any longer lives as barren and unhealthy as those in which no one has lived. You must know, man himself creates his country—by his presence, his habits, his industry—I may say, by his breath; he modifies by degrees the exhalations of the soil and its atmospherical condition; and he renders it more healthy even by breathing in it. Thus, I agree with you so far, that there are uninhabited countries, but none ~~that~~ are uninhabitable."

The hunters walked along as they held this conversation, and they at last reached a wide, open valley, at the bottom of which a river, nearly thawed, was winding along; its southern aspect had induced on its banks, and half-way up the sides of the hills, a slender vegetation. The soil there seemed really desirous of production; with a few inches of vegetable earth it would have become fertile. The Doctor pointed out this characteristic to his friends.

"Look there," said he; "a few enterprising colonists might almost settle in this ravine. With industry and perseverance they could make something quite different of it; not the fields of temperate zones, but at least a presentable district. And if I am not mistaken, there are some four-footed inhabitants. The rascals know the most favoured spots."

"They are Polar bears," cried Altamont, cocking his gun.

"Wait!" cried the Doctor. "These poor things are not thinking of running away. Let them alone: they are coming our way;" and two or three leverets, playing among the stunted heather and fresh mosses, came close to the men, whose presence they did not seem to fear; they, however, hardly succeeded in disarming Altamont. They were soon playing about between the Doctor's legs, who touched them with his hand, saying—

"Why return a shot for a caress? The death of these little creatures would be very useless to us."

"You are right, Doctor," said Hatteras; "they are better spared."

"And these ptarmigan which are flying this way," said Altamont, "and these gentry who are walking along so gravely on stilts."

The whole tribe of birds came towards the hunters, little suspecting the danger the Doctor had averted. "Duke" himself stood still and looked on admiringly. It was a touching and a curious sight to see these pretty creatures flying and gambolling about without fear. They settled on Clawbonny's head and shoulders; they squatted at his feet; they seemed to do their best to receive their unknown guests; the birds called to one another from different points of the ravine; the Doctor seemed quite a charmer. The hunters continued their course, ascending the damp banks of the stream, followed by this tame flock, and at a turn of the valley they saw a herd of eight or ten reindeer grazing on some lichens half-buried in snow—charming animals to look at, graceful and quiet,

with their dentated antlers, which the female carried in common with the male. Their coats, which had an appearance of wool, were already quitting their winter whiteness for the greyish brown of summer, they were no more alarmed nor less tame than the hares and birds of this peaceful spot. Such must have been the relations between the first men and the first animals when the world was yet young. The hunters came upon the herd without their making any attempt at running off. This time the Doctor had much trouble to restrain Altamont's hunter's instinct; for the American could hardly see such grand game without feeling his blood beginning to rise.

Hatteras looked kindly at these quiet beasts, which came and rubbed their noses against the clothes of the Doctor, the friend of all animated nature.

"But, after all," said Altamont, "we came here to hunt, did we not?"

"To hunt the musk-ox," replied Clawbonny, "and nothing else. We should not know what to do with this game if we shot it; we have sufficient provisions with us, so let us enjoy this pleasing spectacle of man mixing with the beasts of the plain without inspiring them with dread."

"That proves they have never seen man," said Hatteras.

"Evidently," returned the Doctor; "and hence we may deduce the conclusion that these animals are not of American origin."

"Why so?" said Altamont.

"If they had been born on the soil of North America, they would know what the biped Man is, and at the sight of us they would certainly have disappeared. No; it is probable they are from the far North. They are originally from those unknown regions of Asia which men have never visited, and they have come hither from the continents which lie about the Pole. Thus, Altamont, you cannot claim them as countrymen."

"A sportsman is not quite so scrupulous, and the game always belongs to the country where it is shot."

"Calm yourself, my valiant Nimrod; for my part, I would rather give up shooting all my life than disturb such a charming population as this. Why, 'Duke' himself fraternizes with these pretty creatures. Believe me, let us be kind when we can. Kindness is power."

"Well, but I should like to see you armed with kindness only in the middle of a pack of wolves or half-a-dozen bears."

"Oh! I do not pretend to charm the savage beast, like Orpheus; besides, bears and wolves would not make our acquaintance as these birds, hares, and reindeer have done."

"Why not?" replied Altamont, "if they have never seen man?"

"Because they are naturally ferocious, and ferocity, like wickedness, is the parent of suspicion;—a remark which applies as much to men as to beasts; and fear is a passion easily felt by those who inspire it."

This short lesson on natural philosophy terminated the conversation. They passed the whole day in this ravine, which the Doctor insisted on calling Northern Arcadia, without his companions expressing any dissent; and in the evening, after a meal which had not cost the life of one of its inhabitants, the three hunters went to sleep in a hollow rock which seemed to have been arranged on purpose to offer them a comfortable shelter.





CHAPTER XVII.

ALTAMONT'S REVENGE.

THE next morning the Doctor and his two companions awoke, after a very quiet night. The cold had made itself felt towards morning, but they had been well wrapped up. The weather remained fine, and they decided on giving another day to surveying the country and looking after musk-oxen. It was time that Altamont had the chance of shooting something; and it was agreed that even if the oxen should be as innocent as the reindeer, he would have a right to shoot them. Besides, their flesh, though with a strong musk flavour, was very delicious; and the hunters were in hopes of taking some portions of ~~fresh~~ meat back to Fort Providence. The morning walk offered no ~~peculiarity~~ ~~worth~~ recording: the country towards the north-east began to change its aspect; and breaks in the ground—the first undulations of a hilly country—gave notice of a different soil. This New-America, if it was not a continent, must be an island of some importance. Besides, they were not there with the intention of settling this geographical question.

“Duke” was running about ahead, and came across the scent of some musk-oxen; he was soon in pursuit and out of sight.

The hunters followed him up, guided by his giving tongue, which taught them he had at last found the objects of their wishes. They hurried on, and, after a march of an hour and a half, they found themselves in presence of two good-sized beasts, rather formidable-looking. They seemed quite surprised at being attacked by “Duke,” without being afraid of him; for they continued grazing and feeding on the short pink moss which just rose above the soil where there was no snow. The Doctor knew them directly by their moderate height, their wide-spread horns, very thick at the base, by

their arched noses like those of a ram, and short tails. Naturalists have, in consequence of their peculiar structure, given them the name of "*Ovibos*," a compound word recalling the two species of animals to which they belong. Their coats were thick, long, and silky.

As soon as they perceived the hunters they took to flight, pursued by the latter; but it was impossible for men on foot to come up with them; and Hatteras and his companions soon stopped, completely blown.

"The devil!" said Altamont.

"The very word," cried the Doctor, as soon as he could recover his breath. "I grant you these beasts must be American, for they don't seem to have a very high opinion of your countrymen."

"That shows what good hunters we are."

The musk-oxen, seeing pursuit had ceased, stood still in an attitude of astonishment. It was quite clear they were not to be run down; so if it were the hunters' object to get round them, the shelf on which they were standing was favourable to this manœuvre; and the hunters, leaving "*Duke*" to keep the animals at bay, crept down the nearest ravine to get to leeward of them. Altamont and the Doctor hid themselves behind a projecting rock, while Hatteras, by suddenly showing himself on the opposite side, was to drive the animals towards his companions.

In about half-an-hour they had gained their respective positions.

"You have no objections, this time, to shooting at these beasts?" said Altamont to the Doctor.

"Not the least," replied the latter, who, at the bottom of his heart, was always a sportsman.

They were talking when they saw the oxen start, "*Duke*" close behind them: and, farther off, Hatteras was shouting and driving them towards the Doctor and Altamont, who sprang up to meet them.

The oxen halted immediately, and, less terrified at the sight of their first assailant than at that of the two others, wheeled round and charged Hatteras, who stood firm, aimed at the nearest of the two oxen, and though his ball hit him right in the forehead, it did not stop him. Hatteras's second shot had no other effect than to make them more furious still. They charged at the hunter, and flung him to the ground in an instant.

"He is lost!" cried the Doctor.

The moment the Doctor called out, Altamont made a spring forward to fly to the assistance of Hatteras; then he stopped, under the influence of contending prejudices.

"No," said he; "it would be cowardly."

His hesitation had not lasted half a second. But though the Doctor saw what was passing in the American's mind, Hatteras understood it, too, and would rather have been killed than owe his life to his rival's intervention. But he had hardly time to think about it, for Altamont was close to him.

Hatteras was lying on the ground, and trying to ward off the horns of the furious beasts; but he could not have held out much longer—and he would soon have been gored to death—when two shots were fired, and he felt the wind of the balls above his head.

"Keep up!" cried Altamont, throwing away his discharged piece, and rushing in on the irritated animals. One of the oxen, hit in the heart, fell at once; the other was about to drive his horns into the unfortunate Captain, when Altamont, in front of him, with one hand drove his snow-knife down his throat, and, with the other, split his skull with his axe.

All this took place almost momentarily; one flash of lightning would have illuminated the whole scene.

"Hurrah! hurrah!" cried Clawbonny.

Hatteras was safe; and he owed his life to the man whom, of all others, he detested! What was passing within him at that moment? This is one of those secrets of the human heart which defy analysis. However, be that as it may, he walked up to his rival and said, without hesitation—

"Altamont, you have saved my life."

"You once saved mine, Hatteras."

There was a moment's silence, and then Altamont added—

"Now we are quits."

"No, Altamont," returned the Captain. "When the Doctor took you from your icy tomb, I knew not who you were; and you have saved me at the risk of your own life, knowing what I am."

"You are my fellow-creature," replied Altamont, "and under no circumstances could an American act like a coward."

"No, surely," cried the Doctor; "he is a true man—a man like you, Hatteras."

"And, like me, he shall share the glory which awaits us."

"The glory of going to the North Pole!" said Altamont.

"Yes," said the Captain, proudly.

"Then I had guessed it!" cried the American. "You have, then, dared to conceive such a design! You have ventured to attempt to reach this inaccessible point! I say, that is sublime."

"But," said Hatteras, quickly, "were you not on the same errand?"

"No," replied Altamont, after a moment's hesitation. "No—truth before everything! No; I had not the grand idea which has brought you so far. I was only trying to make the North-west Passage in my vessel. That is all I can claim."

"Altamont," said Hatteras, taking the American's hand, "be the companion of our glory, and come with us to the discovery of the North Pole."

They then shook hands frankly together. When they turned to the Doctor, he was in tears.

"Ah, my friends," said he, wiping his eyes, "I am so glad you are friends again, and that you have sacrificed that miserable question of nationality to your common success. You agree that England and America have nothing to do with us, and that the closest sympathy ought to unite us against the dangers of our expedition. If the North Pole is attained, what does it matter by whom?"

At last the Doctor grew calmer, after shaking hands with them both at least twenty times.

"And now," said he, "to work, my friends—to work; since I have not done much as a hunter, let me at least make use of what talents I possess."

So he set to work to cut up the ox, and in a short time he had set aside about a hundred pounds of meat, and divided it into three parts, of which they each took one. They then set out on their return to Fort Providence. At ten in the evening the hunters, marching along in the slanting rays of the sun, reached Doctor's House, where Johnson and Bell had prepared a substantial meal for them. But before they sat down, the Doctor called out triumphantly, pointing to his two companions—

"You are aware, Johnson, that I took an Englishman and an American away with me—is it not so?"

"Yes, Mr. Clawbonny," replied the boatswain.

"Well, I bring you back two brothers."

The sailors gladly shook hands with Altamont; the Doctor related all the American captain had done for the English captain, and that night five perfectly contented men slept under the snow house's roof.



CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LAST PREPARATIONS.

THE next day the weather changed to cold ; snow and rain succeeded in gusts for several days. Bell had finished the boat, and it was exactly what they required : partly decked, with a high bulwark, it could keep the sea in rough weather, under fore-sail and jib ; it was light enough to put on a sledge without over-loading the team of dogs.

At last a change of the greatest importance to the travellers was preparing in the state of the Polar basin—the ice began to break up in the middle of the bay ; the higher blocks only required a strong breeze to break away from the shore, and become floating icebergs themselves. But Hatteras would not wait for the total disruption of the ice before he began his expedition. As theirs would be a land journey, it mattered but little whether the sea was open or not ; he therefore fixed their departure for the 24th of June, by which time all their preparations would be entirely completed. Johnson and Bell put the sledge in perfect repair, and the old runners were replaced by new ones. The travellers expected to profit by the few weeks of fine weather which Nature accords to hyperborean regions to make their excursion ; then there would be less to suffer, and fewer obstacles to overcome. A few days before their departure, the 20th of June, the ice left several passes open, of which they took advantage to try the boat in a trip as far as Cape Washington. The sea was not perfectly clear—far from it ; but it no longer showed a solid surface, and it would have been impossible to attempt to make one's way on foot across the broken ice-fields.

This trial-trip made them acquainted with the seagoing qualities of their boat. On their return they were eye-witnesses of a curious

incident. It was the sight of a gigantic bear seal-hunting. The animal was, fortunately, too much occupied to attend to the boat, or he would certainly have chased it. He was on the watch at a crack in the ice-field, into which the seal had evidently plunged—the bear watching for its reappearance with all the patience of a hunter, or rather of a fisherman, for he really was fishing. He never moved. All at once, the surface of the hole became agitated, the seal came up to breathe. The bear lay on the ice with his two paws round the crack. Another instant, and the seal showed his head above water, but he had not time to plunge again; the bear's paws were clasped round the animal, and he was dragged unresistingly from his favourite element. The contest did not last long. The seal struggled for a few seconds, and was hugged to death in the monster's embrace; which, though his prey was of considerable size, sprang with it from one piece of ice to another, until it reached land, when it quickly disappeared.

"Good day!" cried Johnson. "That bear has a paw too many at his service."

The boat soon reached the little harbour Bell had contrived in the ice. There were still four days to wait before the moment fixed by Hatteras for their departure. He urged on the final preparations, for he was in a hurry to leave this New America, which was nothing to him; he had not named it, nor did he feel himself at home there. The 22nd of June they began loading the sledge with the encampment effects, the tent, and stores. They took with them two hundred pounds of salt meat, three cases of preserved meat and vegetables, fifty pounds of pickles and lime-juice, a hundredweight and a quarter of flour, packets of cress and scurvy-grass seeds, supplied by the Doctor's planting; they added to all this two hundred pounds of powder, instruments, arms, and other baggage, including the boat, and the caoutchouc punt. The sledge's load altogether amounted to nearly fifteen hundredweight—a tolerable load for four dogs, the more so, that the Esquimaux never make them work more than four days together, while there being no relays, they would have to be in harness every day; but the travelers intended to assist them as much as possible, and to make as short stages as they could—the distance from Victoria Bay to the Pole being but three hundred and sixty miles at most, and at the rate of twelve miles a day they would only require a month;

besides, when the land failed them, they could have recourse to the boat, with which they would finish their journey without fatigue either to men or dogs. They were all in good health. The winter, though severe, had left them in a satisfactory state : all, from following the Doctor's advice, had escaped the complaints incident to cold climates. Perhaps they had grown a trifle thinner, which gave the worthy Clawbonny great satisfaction ; but they had become inured, body and mind, to this rough life, and were now sufficiently acclimatized to face the trials of fatigue and cold without failing.

Besides, they were going a step further towards the object of their voyage—towards this inaccessible Pole, after which their only thought would be—home. The sympathy which now united the five members of the expedition would contribute to the success of their bold undertaking, and not one of them anticipated failure. The Doctor had induced them to put themselves into regular training before setting out on such a long and distant journey.

"My friends," said he, "I do not suggest that you should imitate the running-men in England, who reduce themselves eighteen pounds in two days' training, and twenty-five, after five days ; but still it would be as well to do something towards being in the best possible condition for such a long journey. Now the first principle of training is to take off the fat, for the runner as for the jockey. By means of purgatives and violent exercise, they arrive at incredible results, such as from running a mile without losing breath, they have actually run twenty-five with ease. A man named Townsend has been said to have run a hundred miles in twelve hours without stopping."

"A very fine thing," said Johnson ; "and though I am not very fat, if I must get thinner still——"

"By no means, Johnson—no exaggeration ; but it cannot be denied that training has a good effect : it adds power of resistance to the bones, elasticity to the muscles ; it clears the organs of sight and hearing ; therefore do not let it be neglected."

At last, in condition or not, the travellers were ready on the 23rd of June ; it was a Sunday, and a day of complete rest.

The inhabitants of Fort Providence did not see the moment of departure arrive without feeling it. It pained them to leave this snow house which had so well done its duty by them, and the hospitable shores of Victoria Bay, where they had passed the later

winter months. Would they find them still standing on their return? Or would the rays of the sun complete the dissolution of those fragile walls? They had passed many pleasant hours there! The Doctor, at supper, did not fail to recall these souvenirs to his companions' minds, nor forget to thank Heaven for its visible protection.

At last the hour of sleep arrived. Each man went to bed early, to rise early in the morning. Thus passed their last night at Fort Providence.





CHAPTER XIX.

THE MARCH NORTHWARD.

THE next day, at dawn, Hatteras gave the signal to start. The dogs were harnessed to the sledge; having well fed, and having done no work, and lived comfortably all through the winter, they had no reason for not being very serviceable during the summer. They gave no trouble in being attached to their sledge.

The Greenland dogs were good creatures, after all; their savage nature had been tamed down by degrees. They lost their resemblance to the wolf, to become more like "Duke," that model of canine sagacity; in fact, they were civilized. "Duke" certainly might claim a share in their education; he had given them an example of good-breeding, like an Englishman, and, very particular, he was a long time before he became intimate with dogs who had not been properly introduced to him, and at first he cut them; but from sharing the same dangers, the same privations, and the same good luck, these animals, though of a quite different breed, got along very well together at last. The Doctor patted the Greenlanders, and "Duke" was not the least jealous.

The men were as fit as the animals, and the former meant to walk as well as the latter could draw.

They started at six in the morning, the weather being very fine. After following the line of the bay and passing Cape Washington, Hatteras gave them the route—directly north; at seven the travelers lost sight of the cone of the light-house and Fort Providence to the southward.

The journey began well—much better than that undertaken in mid-winter in the search for fuel! Hatteras was then leaving mutiny and despair behind him on board his ship, without being by

any means sure of the object of which he was in search ; he left a crew half-dead with cold ; he set out with companions weakened by the privations of an Arctic winter ; he, the man for the north, was returning to the south ! Now, on the contrary, surrounded by friends both healthy and strong, thus supported and encouraged, he was directing his steps to the Pole, the object of his whole life ! No man had ever been nearer the acquisition of great glory for his country and for himself.

The Doctor could not help feeling that Hatteras must be thinking of these things, so naturally brought to his mind by his present situation, when he saw him so ardent. Clawbonny, good fellow, was delighted with whatever pleased his friend, and since the reconciliation of the two captains, his two friends, he thought himself the happiest of men—himself a total stranger to all ideas of hate, envy, and rivalry. What would be the result of this journey he could not foresee ; but at all events it was a good beginning, and that was a great deal.

The east coast of New America extended westward by a succession of bays beyond Cape Washington ; the travellers, to avoid this curve, after ascending the first high ground by Bell Mount, turned northward, taking the upper ranges. It was a great saving of distance. Hatteras intended, unless driven from his course by unexpected obstacles, to march in a direct line north for three hundred and fifty miles from Fort Providence to the Pole.

The thermometer stood at 37 deg. ; the weather was not very settled—sometimes clear, sometimes hazy ; but neither cold, nor even gales, would have stopped travellers so bent on getting forward.

The route was easily kept by compass. The needle became less inactive, the farther it was removed from the magnetic pole ; it seemed to waver no longer ; though, the magnetic pole once passed, it turned the reverse way, and pointed south to the travellers who were going north ; but this reversed indication caused them no embarrassment.

Besides the Doctor invented a very simple mode of steering a course without constantly recurring to the compass ; once their exact position observed, in clear weather they fixed on some object exactly north and situated perhaps two or three miles ahead of them ; they then marched on till they came up to it, and then

chose another mark in the same direction, and so on. In this manner they diverged but very little from their true course. For the first few days they got over about twenty miles a day, in twelve hours; the rest of the time was devoted to food and rest; the tent kept them warm enough while they slept.

It continued growing warmer. The snow in places was entirely melted, according to the character of the soil, while others remained as white as ever. Great pools of water were continually met with, and even ponds which a slight stretch of imagination might have converted into lakes, and into which the travellers sometimes plunged up to their knees. They only laughed at it, and the Doctor was quite pleased at these unexpected baths.

"Water can't wet us in this country," said he; "that element has here only a right to be a solid or a vapour; as to a fluid, that is an abuse! Ice or vapour, but never water!"

They did not neglect to hunt as they moved along, for fresh food was a necessity. Altamont and Bell, without leaving the line of route so far, beat the neighbouring ravines; they shot ptarmigan, guillemots, geese, and a few grey hares. These animals by degrees lost their confidence, and it became very difficult to get near them. Without "Duke," the hunters would have lost many a shot.

Hatteras advised them never to be farther than a mile away, for they had neither a day nor an hour to spare, and they could only reckon on three months' fine weather. Every man, too, had to be at his post by the sledge at any difficult place, or narrow gorge, or steep declivity which required assistance to pass the sledge through or over; then they all harnessed themselves to it or hung on to its sides; more than once they had to unload it completely, and even that was not enough to guarantee it from several shocks, which Bell repaired as well as he could.

The third day (Wednesday, the 26th of June), the travellers came to a lake several acres in extent and still entirely frozen over, from its easterly position; the ice was sufficiently strong to bear them and their sledge. This ice must have dated from some remote winter, for its situation would have prevented its thawing. It was a compact mirror, over which Arctic summers had no power. What seemed to confirm this observation was that its banks were bordered by dry snow, the inferior layers of which might certainly be attributed to the frosts of former years.

From that time the level of the country became lower, from which the Doctor concluded it could be of no great extent northward; moreover, it was very probable that New America was only an island, and did not extend as far as the Pole. The ground became level by degrees, and they could only distinguish a few low hills lost in the bluish mist of the distance.

Until then the expedition had cost them but little fatigue; the travellers only suffered from the reverberation of the solar rays on the snow. This intense reflection might occasion snow-blindness, which it would be impossible to avoid. At any other time they would have continued their route by night to avoid this inconvenience, but now there was no night. The snow was, fortunately, gradually melting, and lost much of its glitter when on the point of becoming water. On the 28th of June the thermometer was at 45 deg. above zero. This rise was accompanied by rain in abundance, which the travellers accepted stoically, nay, with pleasure; it came to accelerate the melting of the snow. They were obliged to take to their deerskin moccasins again, and alter the arrangement of the sledge's runners. Their progress was somewhat retarded, but in the absence of serious obstacles, they still got on. Sometimes the Doctor picked up round or flattened stones, resembling shingle on a sea-beach, and then he believed he was near the Polar basin; but still the plain rolled its boundless expanse far beyond human sight.

It did not possess a vestige of any dwelling-place—neither huts, nor cairns, nor Esquimaux “caches”; they were evidently the first to set foot in this new country; the Greenlanders, whose tribes frequent the Arctic regions, never pushed so far as this, and yet in this country there was very good hunting for the poor creatures, who are always in a state of starvation. Sometimes they could see bears following their little body to leeward, without showing any intention of attacking them; in the distance there were musk-oxen and numerous herds of reindeer. The Doctor would have been glad to have caught some of the latter, to break them to harness, and so reinforce his dog team; but they were very shy, and it was impossible to take them alive.

On the 29th Bell shot a fox, and Altamont was lucky enough to kill a moderate-sized musk-ox, and in so doing gave his companions a great opinion of his coolness and skill. He was certainly a first-

rate sportsman, and the Doctor, who was a judge, admired him extremely. The ox was cut up, and supplied them with abundance of fresh meat. Such luxurious meals were always well received; the least dainty could not help looking with satisfaction at slices of fresh meat. The Doctor sometimes could not help laughing at himself when he surprised himself in doing so.

"We need not be particular," said he. "A meal is a thing of importance in Polar expeditions."

"Yes, indeed," replied Johnson, "when it all depends on a good shot."

"You are right, Johnson; and one cares less what one eats when one knows the pot is boiling in the kitchen."

On the 30th the country, contrary to all expectation, became more broken, as if it had undergone volcanic action: cones and pointed peaks were multiplied ad infinitum, and some were very lofty.

A breeze began to blow violently from the south-east; it soon became a hurricane, and drove across the snow-covered rocks and ice-hills, which though on dry land looked like hummocks and icebergs. Their presence on this high level puzzled the Doctor, who was seldom puzzled at all.

Damp, warm weather succeeded the storm; thaw began again in earnest. They could hear the crashing of blocks of ice all round them, mixed with the more imposing roar of falling avalanches. For some time the travellers carefully shunned the foot of the hills, and even avoided speaking aloud; for the sound of the voice might, by agitating the air, occasion a catastrophe. They witnessed frequent and terrible falls of ice, which they would not have had time to escape from; in fact, the principal feature in Polar avalanches is their frightful suddenness—differing in that from those of Norway and Switzerland. There a ball is formed, at first of inconsiderable size, which, increasing from the snow and masses of stones in its route, falls with increasing rapidity, carrying destruction with it into forests and buries whole villages; but, after all, it takes a certain amount of time to fall. Now, such is not the case in countries affected by Arctic frost: the displacement of a mass of ice is unexpected; like a thunderbolt, its fall is instantaneous, and to see it oscillating on its base would be certain destruction—no cannon-ball is more rapid in its flight.

Fortunately, no catastrophe threatened the sledge and its leaders;

proper precautions were taken, and all danger avoided. This district, though so broken, was not of any great extent, and three days afterwards they found themselves again in plains where it was much easier travelling. They were then surprised by a fresh phenomenon, which for a long time perplexed the philosophers of both worlds. The little troop was winding along a chain of hills not more than fifty feet high, which seemed to extend several miles in length, and its eastern slope was covered with snow, but with snow perfectly red.

The first effect of this crimson carpet was rather terrifying; but the Doctor reassured his companions, or at least instructed them, when he told them he was acquainted with this peculiarity of red snow, and the chemical analysis made of it by Wollaston, Candolle, and Bauer; he informed them this snow was met with not only in Arctic countries, but in Switzerland, among the Alps. De Saussure collected a quantity of it in the Breven in 1760, and since then Captains Ross, Sabine, and other navigators had brought some back from their Arctic expeditions.

Altamont questioned the Doctor as to the nature of this extraordinary substance, and the latter acquainted him with the fact that the colour arose solely from the presence of organic corpuscles, and it was for a long time questioned whether they were animal or vegetable; but it was at last ascertained they belonged to a family of microscopic mushrooms of the *Uredo* genus, which Bauer proposed to call "*Uredo nivalis*."

The Doctor then plunged his walking-pole into the snow, and showed his companions that the layer was nine feet deep, and he asked them to calculate how many there were of these mushrooms in a space of several miles, when men of science had given as many as forty-three thousand in one centimetre square. From the position of the slope, this colour must have belonged to some very distant time, for these corpuscles are decomposed, neither by evaporation nor the melting of the snow, nor does their colour change. This phenomenon, though thus explained, is no less singular; red is a colour but little met with to any great extent in nature; the reflection of the sun on this crimson carpet produced most extraordinary effects; it gave a flaming tint to everything that surrounded it—men, rocks, and animals, and it seemed as if torrents of blood were flowing at the travellers' feet.

The Doctor, who had been unable to examine this substance when he saw it on the Crimson Cliffs at Baffin's Bay, here was able to take his time over it, and he carefully took several bottles full of it away with him.

It took them three hours' walking to leave this "Red soil" or Field of Blood," as he called it, behind them, and then the country resumed its usual aspect.





CHAPTER XX.

FOOTMARKS IN THE SNOW.

THE fourth of July was spent in a thick fog. Their northward route could only be maintained with extreme difficulty; every moment they were obliged to refer to the compass. Fortunately, no accident happened in the gloom; only Bell broke his snow-shoes against a projecting piece of rock.

"Upon my word," said Johnson, "I thought, after the Thames and the Mersey, I knew something about fogs; but I see I was mistaken."

"Why," observed Bell, "we ought to light torches, as they do in London and Liverpool."

"Why not?" replied Clawbonny. "That is an idea, indeed; it would not light the road much, but we should see our guide, and we could direct our course better."

"But," said Bell, "where are the torches to come from?"

"With tow dipped in spirits of wine and fastened to the end of our poles."

"That won't take long to do," said Johnson.

In a quarter of an hour they were marching along with torches, lighting their way through the damp darkness of the route. But if they kept a straighter line they did not go any faster, and these dark exhalations did not vanish before the 6th of July; the ground then being chilled by a breeze from the north, which carried off the fog like so many torn rags. The Doctor then took an observation, and ascertained that they had only made eight miles a day while the fog lasted. On the 6th they made haste, to make up for lost time, and set off early in the morning. Altamont and Bell took their places ahead, reconnoitring the ground and looking for game. "Duke" went

with them. The weather, with its extraordinary fluctuations, had become clear again, and very dry ; and though the guides were two miles ahead of the sledge, the Doctor did not let one of their motions escape him.

He was, therefore, surprised to see them suddenly stop and betray signs of great astonishment. They seemed to be looking far ahead towards the horizon.

Then they stooped down and carefully examined the ground, and then stood up again. Bell seemed anxious to go on, but Altamont equally so to stop him."

"What are they about?" said he to Johnson.

"I was watching them just now," said the old sailor, "but I cannot make out what they are about."

"They have crossed the track of some animal," Hatteras remarked.

"Hardly that," said the Doctor.

"Why?"

"Because 'Duke' would have barked."

"They certainly are examining footmarks."

"Let us get on," said Hatteras; "we shall soon know all about it."

In twenty minutes they were all together, and Hatteras, the Doctor, and Johnson shared in Altamont's and Bell's surprise. There were visible traces of men, as fresh as if made the evening before, thinly scattered over the snow.

"They must be Esquimaux," said Hatteras.

"Yes, here are the impressions of their show-shoes."

"You think so?" said Altamont.

"That is very certain."

"Well, what do you say to this?" returned Altamont, pointing out another track very often repeated.

"That step?"

"Yes, that step. Do you pretend that belongs to an Esquimaux?"

The Doctor looked attentively at it, and was more surprised than ever. The impression of a European shoe, with its nails in the sole and in the heel, was deeply marked in the snow. There was no doubt of it whatever; some man, a stranger, had passed that way.

"Europeans here!" cried Hatteras.

"Evidently," said Johnson.

"And still," returned Clawbonny, "it is so obviously incredible, that we must look twice at it before giving an opinion."

The Doctor therefore examined it twice, and even thrice, and was obliged to acknowledge its extraordinary origin.

Daniel Defoe's hero was not more amazed when he saw the impression of a human foot in the sand; but his first impression was that of fear, while here that of Hatteras was disgust. A European so near the Pole!

They marched onward to follow up these tracks; they lasted for about a quarter of a mile, mixed with others of snow-shoes and moccasins, and then they turned off in a westerly direction.

When they got to that point, the travellers consulted whether it was worth while following them.

"No," said Hatteras, "let us go on——"

He was interrupted by an exclamation from the Doctor, who had just picked up a more convincing object still, about the origin of which there could be no mistake. It was the lens of a telescope.

"This time," said he, "there can be no doubt of a stranger's presence in this soil!"

"Forward," called out Hatteras; and he uttered that word so energetically that everyone followed him at once, and the sledge set off again.

"Come," said the Doctor, "we must keep up our spirits if we are out of luck."

"It must be allowed," observed Johnson, without being heard by Altamont, "if we are to find the place taken, it will be enough to disgust one with a voyage to the Pole."

"And still," remarked Bell, "there can be no doubt ——"

"None. It is all very well to think it over in one's mind till one finishes by saying it is improbable, or impossible; there is no getting over the fact that that shoe could not have made that impression in the snow without belonging to a human foot. I could forgive an Esquimaux; but not a European!"

"The fact is," cried Johnson, aloud, "if we find all the beds taken at the sign of 'The World's End,' it will be very vexatious."

"Particularly vexatious," added Altamont.

"Well, we shall see," said Clawbonny, and they set forward again.

This day passed over without anything new to confirm the presence of strangers on this part of New America, and they chose at last a place for the evening encampment. A violent gale having sprung up from the north, they were obliged to seek shelter for the tent at the bottom of a ravine; the sky seemed threatening; long clouds traversed the sky with great rapidity; they were pretty near the ground, and the eye was hardly quick enough to follow them; sometimes particles of vapour skimmed along the ground, and the tent was with difficulty kept erect against the hurricane.

"We are going to have an ugly night," said Johnson, after supper.

"It will not be a cold, but a noisy, one," replied the Doctor.

"Let us make the tent as safe as we can."

"Yes, Mr. Clawbonny; for if the squall carried our tent-cloth away, God knows where we should find it again."

Every possible care was taken to avoid such danger, and the tired travellers did their best to sleep.

But that was impossible for them; the storm was let loose and drove everything before it from the south to the north with the greatest fury. Avalanches of snow were hurled down the ravines, while the echoes rolled like thunder above their heads; the atmosphere seemed to be the theatre of a pitiless combat between air and water—two elements formidable enough when in anger; fire alone was wanting at the battle.

Their over-excited ears could distinguish peculiar noises amid the general crash—not the rumbling which accompanies falling bodies, but the distant crash of bodies clashing against one another; they could hear the clear sharp sound as of breaking steel amid the prolonged roll of the storm.

This last was naturally explained by the falling avalanches, but the Doctor was at a loss to account for the others.

Profiting by a few moments' cessation, during which the hurricane seemed to be taking breath to begin again with greater violence than ever, the travellers exchanged a few words.

"It comes from down there," said the Doctor, "as if icebergs and ice-floes were dashed together."

"Yes," replied Altamont; "one would think the whole crust of the earth was breaking up. There, did you hear that?"

"If we were near the sea," resumed the Doctor, "I should say it was really ice breaking up."

"In fact," said Johnson, "there is no other explanation for it."

"Do you think we have reached the coast?" said Hatteras.

"It might not be impossible," replied the Doctor. "There," added he, after a most violent crash, "does not that sound like the crushing of icebergs together? We may be very near the ocean."

"If that is the case," returned Hatteras, "I shall not hesitate to venture across the ice."

"Oh," said the Doctor, "it cannot fail to be broken up after such a storm. We shall see to-morrow; anyhow, if there are travellers abroad in such a night as this, I pity them with all my heart."

The hurricane lasted ten hours, without a break; not one of the men could get a moment's sleep, and the night was passed in great uneasiness.

Under such circumstances, any fresh incident—a storm or an avalanche—might cause them serious delay. The Doctor would have liked to have gone out and watched the storm, but he did not venture to face such a wind.

Fortunately, the storm blew over in the early morning, and they were able to leave the tent, which had gallantly resisted. The Doctor, Hatteras, and Johnson turned their steps towards a hill about three hundred feet high, and they climbed to the top of it.

The eyes of Hatteras were rapidly turned northward: the horizon seemed bathed in dark, vapoury clouds.

"That may be the effect produced by the ocean," said the Doctor.

"Right," said Hatteras; "the sea ought to be there."

"That colour is what we call the blink of open water," said Johnson.

"Precisely."

"Now, then, to the sledge," cried Hatteras, "and on to this new ocean."

"This rejoices your heart?" said Clawbonny to the Captain.

"It does, it does," replied the other, enthusiastically; "in a short time we shall have reached the Pole! And you, my good Doctor! Does not such a prospect rejoice your heart too?"

"Yes, I can always rejoice at the happiness of others."

They returned to the ravine, got the sledge ready, and broke up their camp. The route was settled, and everyone was afraid of finding the tracks of the day before ; but for the rest of the way not a vestige of a footstep, either of a stranger or a native, showed itself. Three hours afterwards they reached the coast.

"The sea ! the sea !" they all called out at once.

"And an open sea, too," added the Captain. It was ten in the morning.

The hurricane had effectively cleared the Polar basin ; broken masses of ice were floating about in all directions ; the larger ones, forming into icebergs, had "got their anchors," as the sailors say, and were making for the open sea. The floe had been very rudely treated by the wind ; a hail of fine blades of ice and splinters, and dust of the same, covered the surrounding rocks. What remained of the ice round the banks seemed rotten, and was strewed with large bunches of dissolved seaweed and wrack. The ocean lay before their eyes, as far as they could see, and not an island or land of any sort broke the line of the horizon. Eastward and westward the coast formed two capes, which ran down gradually to the water's edge ; the sea broke at their feet, and a light foam was carried along by the wind. The soil of New America thus died away in the Polar ocean, without abrupt breaks, but by a quiet and gentle fall of the land ; it rounded out in an open roadstead, bounded by its two promontories.

In the centre a projecting rock formed a small, natural port, sheltered on three sides ; it ran inland, following the wide bed of a stream—the ordinary course of escape for the melted snows of winter, and at this moment a foaming torrent.

Hatteras, after taking a good view of the outline of the coast, determined to begin his preparations for departure that very day : to launch the boat, take the sledge to pieces, and embark it for future expeditions.

That would require the whole day. So the tent was pitched, and after a cheering meal they began to work. While they were thus occupied the Doctor took his instruments to make an observation, and determine the hydrographical position of a part of the bay.

Hatteras hurried them on ; he was in great haste to start ; he wished to have left the land in case any detachment of travellers should arrive at the seaside before they were gone.

At five in the evening Johnson and Bell had completed their task. The boat was afloat in the little port, its mast stepped, its jib and foresail brailed up, the provisions and the pieces composing the sledge put on board, and there only remained the tent and a few other things to be taken with them the following morning.

When the Doctor came back he found all the preparations made. When he saw the boat lying quietly at her moorings, the idea occurred to him to give the port the name of Altamont. There could be no difficulty about that, and it met with the approval of all, and it was consequently baptized—Altamont Harbour.

According to the Doctor's calculations it was situated in latitude 87 deg. 05 min., and longitude 118 deg. 35 min. east of Greenwich; that is to say, less than 3 deg. of the Pole. The travellers had come a distance of two hundred miles, from Victoria Bay to Altamont Harbour.





CHAPTER XXI.

THE OPEN SEA.

THE next morning Johnson and Bell proceeded to put their encamping materials on board. At eight everything was ready. As they were about to leave the shore the Doctor began thinking about the travellers whose tracks they had met—an incident which still preoccupied his mind very much. Were these men in search of the North Pole? Had they any means at their disposal for crossing the Polar Sea? Were they likely to fall in with them in their new route?

Not a vestige for three days had betrayed these travellers' presence; and certainly, whatever they may have been, they had never reached Altamont Harbour. This was a spot hitherto virgin of any human steps. Still the Doctor, haunted by these ideas, wanting to cast a last look over the country, ascended an eminence about a hundred feet high at the most, whence he could survey the whole horizon. When he got to the top he put his telescope to his eye: he was surprised to find he could see nothing; in examining the glass he found the object-lens missing.

"That object-lens," cried he, and down he hurried, giving such a shout that his companions heard him; and very anxious they all were when they saw him hurrying down the hill.

"Well; what is it now?" asked Johnson.

The Doctor was so out of breath that he could not utter a word; at last he gasped out:—

"The traces . . . footsteps! . . . the detachment!"

"What!" cried Hatteras; "strangers here?"

"No, no," the Doctor went on; "my object-glass—mine." . .

He showed them his defective telescope.

"Ah!" cried the American; "you have lost?"

"Yes!"

"But then those footmarks?"

"Our own, my friends—our own!" cried the Doctor. "We must have lost ourselves in the fog. We had been going round and round, and have come across our own tracks."

"But the marks of shoes?" said Hatteras.

"Bell's shoes—Bell's own; he broke his snow-shoes and walked all one day in his other ones."

"Quite true," said Bell.

The mistake was so obvious that everyone began to laugh, except Hatteras, who was, however, not the least pleased at that discovery.

"How ridiculous we have been," said Clawbonny, when they had become quiet again. "What suppositions we indulged in! Strangers on this coast! Another time we must be careful to think before we speak. Now we are free from all uneasiness in this respect, we can do nothing better than go to sea."

"Off we go!" said Hatteras.

They all went on board, set the jib and hoisted the mainsail, and soon left Altamont Harbour far astern. This voyage began on Wednesday, the 10th of July; the navigators found themselves at no great distance from the Pole, exactly a hundred and seventy-five miles; and supposing land was situated on that point of the globe, the voyage to it by sea would be a short one.

The wind was light but favourable; the thermometer was at 50 deg. above zero, and it was really warm.

The boat had not suffered at all from its journey on the sledge; it was in a very good state, and worked easily. Johnson was at the helm; the Doctor, Bell, and the American were seated at their ease among the baggage, some on deck and some below. Hatteras in the bow was watching for that mysterious spot towards which an insurmountable force was attracting him, like the needle to the north. If land was to be seen, he must be the first to hail it. That honour really belonged to him.

He remarked that the surface of the Polar Ocean consisted of very short waves, such as land-locked seas would produce. In that he noticed he saw an indication of the proximity of land, and the Doctor shared his opinion.

It is easy to understand why Hatteras was so anxious to fall in

with a continent at the North Pole. How disappointed would he have been to find the uncertain intangible sea extended where land, however small the space it occupied, was so necessary to his project. In fact, how could he give a special name to an indefinite space on the ocean?—how hoist his country's flag on the waves?—and how take possession of it in the name of her Gracious Majesty?

With his eyes fixed on the line of the horizon, Hatteras stood forward in the boat's bows with the compass in his hand. There was, indeed, nothing else to limit the extent of the Polar basin; it became confounded at last with the pure blue sky of those zones. A few icebergs sailing away before the wind seemed to be clearing a passage for these hardy sailors.

The aspect of this region afforded some strange characteristics. It might have been the nervous and over-excited state of their minds which made it appear so. It is difficult to express an opinion about it: but the Doctor, in his daily notes, has described this singular physiognomy of the ocean; he speaks of it as did Penny, according to whom these countries present the most striking contrast—of a sea animated by millions of living creatures. The liquid plain, tinted by the vaguest shades of foreign seas, was so strangely transparent, that it allowed the eye to penetrate to an immense depth; it seemed as if the Polar basin was lighted from below like one vast aquarium; some electric phenomenon, produced at the bottom of the sea, no doubt illuminated its inmost recesses. Thus the boat seemed to float over a bottomless abyss.

Over this extraordinary sheet of water birds were flying in countless flocks, resembling the thick clouds of approaching storms. Birds of passage, shore birds, every specimen of the great aquatic family, from the albatross, so common in Australian seas, to the penguin of the Arctic Ocean. Their screams actually rendered the travellers deaf. When he looked at them the Doctor's science as a naturalist was at fault; their names escaped his recollection, and he actually caught himself dipping his head when he heard their wings flapping above him.

Some of these monsters were twenty feet across when their wings were extended. They entirely covered the boat in their flight, and there were birds in legions whose names never appear in the "*Index Ornithologus*" of London.

The Doctor was rather put out of countenance to find his science so at fault.

When the Doctor left the wonders of the air to look at the quiet surface of the ocean, he met with no less astonishing productions of the animal kingdom ; among others, medusæ thirty feet wide ; they were the principal food of the aerial population, and were floating like islets in the midst of a large and gigantic wrack. What a difference there was between those microscopic medusæ observed by Scoresby in the Greenland seas, whose number it is quite beyond the ordinary process of human memory to quote.

When the eye looked down into these transparent waters the sight was no less marvellous ; where thousands of fish of all descriptions were to be seen in the clear element. Sometimes they darted down to the lowest depths, and the eye could watch them diminish till they disappeared like spectres in a phantasmagoria, or else increase in size as they rose to the surface. The marine monsters seemed in no wise frightened at the boat ; they even touched it with their fins, and what would have terrified professional whalers did not even present the appearance of danger to our navigators, though some of these inhabitants of the sea were of formidable proportions.

Young sea-calves played together ; the narwhale, armed with its long, straight, and pointed horn—a marvellous instrument which serves it to saw through the ice—was in pursuit of the timid cetaceous tribe ; numberless whales were sporting in all directions ; the North-Caper, with its flexible tail and large caudal fins, was darting through the water and feeding in its course on creatures as rapid as itself ; while the indolent white whale peaceably swallowed shoals of molluscs as indolent as itself.

Nearer the bottom the pointed-nosed whale, Greenland anarnacks, long and black ; giant cachalots, a species spread over all seas, were swimming amidst banks of ambergris, or fought battles which reddened the ocean for a surface of several miles ; cylindrical physales ; the great tegusik of Labrador ; dolphins, with the dorsal fin like the blade of a sword ; the whole family of seals and walruses, sea-bears, sea-dogs, sea-horses, sea-lions, and sea-elephants seemed to be grazing in their moist ocean pastures ; and the Doctor all the time was able to admire and wonder at these numberless animals as easily as he could have seen and admired the crustaceæ and the fish through the crystal basins at the Zoological Gardens.

What beauty, what variety, what power there is in nature ! How strange and wondrous everything seemed in the bosom of these regions surrounding the Pole.

The atmosphere was supernaturally pure, it seemed overcharged with oxygen. The navigators breathed with delight an air which seemed to inspire them with fresher life ; without accounting for it, they felt more fuel was added to their functions of life, which were accomplished with superhuman energy ; ideas in their over-excited brains became grandiose, and in an hour they lived the life of a whole day.

And all this time the boat was sailing quietly along with a light wind, which the albatrosses occasionally fanned into greater activity with their vast wings.

Towards evening Hatteras and his companions lost sight of the coast of New America. Night reigned alike in the temperate and the equinoctial zones ; but here the sun traced a circle rigorously parallel with that of the ocean. The boat, bathed in its oblique rays, could not get out of this luminous centre, which moved as it moved.

Animated nature in hyperborean regions nevertheless was sensible of evening's approach, just as much as if the sun's radiance was lost behind the horizon. Birds, fish, and cetaceous tribes disappeared—where ? Who can tell ? But to their screams and the movement of the sea, agitated by the respiration of monsters of the deep, an immovable silence succeeded. The waves seemed to sleep in an insensible undulation, and night resumed her peaceful influence under the sparkling rays of the sun.

The boat had gained a degree northward since they left Altamont Harbour. The next day nothing was yet visible on the horizon. None of those lofty peaks which signal land from afar, nor of those peculiar signs by which a sailor feels the approach to isles or continents.

The wind was not strong, but in their favour. There was very little swell ; birds and fish reappeared, as numerous as the day before. The Doctor, leaning over the side, could see the whales leave the lower depths and rise by degrees to the surface of the sea ; a few icebergs, and here and there some scattered blocks, alone broke the ocean's vast monotony.

Altogether there was not sufficient ice to interfere with a ship's

progress. It must be remarked that the boat was then ten degrees above the frozen pole, and according to the parallels of temperature it is as if it had been ten degrees below. It was not astonishing, therefore, that the sea was at that period free from ice, as it must also have been in crossing Disko Bay to Baffin's Bay. Thus a vessel would have had plenty of sea-room during the summer months.

This observation is of great practical value; in fact, if the whalers ever get into the Polar basin either by the seas of North America or by those of Northern Asia they are certain of full cargoes, for this part of the ocean seems the universal breeding-place—the general resort of whales, seals, and all marine animals.

At twelve the water-line and sky-line were both alike indistinct, and the Doctor began to doubt the existence of any continent in these high latitudes. However, reflection compelled him to believe in the existence of an Arctic continent; for during the first days of the world's existence, after the earth's crust had cooled, the waters, formed by the condensation of atmospheric vapour, must have obeyed the law of centrifugal force, and flown off towards the equatorial zone, abandoning the motionless extremities of the globe. Hence, countries bordering on the Pole necessarily came into existence. The Doctor thought this was a very good argument, and so it seemed to Hatteras, who still sought to penetrate the misty horizon. His telescope never left his eye. He examined the colour of the water, the form of the waves, every puff of wind, to find therein some indication of approaching land. There he stood, leaning forward in the boat; and anyone would have admired him, even without knowing his hopes and his wishes, so much energy and anxious inquiry was there in his attitude.





CHAPTER XXII.

THE APPROACH TO THE POLE.

TIME went on, amidst this uncertainty. Nothing broke the clear line of the surrounding horizon, nothing but sea and sky. Not a blade of grass or land vegetation—such as made the heart of Christopher Columbus beat more quickly in his breast, as he sailed along to discover America—was to be seen on the surface of the ocean.

Still Hatteras kept his anxious watch. At last, about six in the evening, a shapeless vapour, but of sensible elevation, appeared above the level of the sea; it might have been called a plume of smoke. The sky was perfectly clear: this vapour therefore was not to be explained away as a cloud; it disappeared for a moment, and then reappeared, as if in a state of motion.

Hatteras was the first to observe this phenomenon; he kept it in the field of his telescope, examining it carefully, for an hour. Then at once some certain indication made him stretch his arm towards the horizon, and break out—

“Land! land!”

At these words everyone rose as if touched by an electric spark.

A sort of smoke hung visibly over the sea.

“I see it! I see it!” cried the Doctor.

“Yes; so do I!” said Johnson.

Altamont declared it was a cloud.

“Land! land!” Hatteras called out again, decidedly.

The five navigators again looked at it closely; but, as often happens to objects when distance renders them indistinct, it seemed to have disappeared. At last they made it out again, and the

Doctor fancied he could see a rapid light twenty or twenty-five miles to the north.

"It is a volcano!" he called out.

"A volcano?" said Altamont. "What, in such a high latitude?"

"Why not? Is not Iceland, so to say, nothing but volcanoes?"

"Yes, Iceland may be—but here, so near the Pole!"

"Well, but did not our illustrious countryman, Sir James Ross, prove the existence of two volcanoes on the austral continent, which he named the Erebus and the Terror, in full activity in longitude 170 deg., and latitude 78 deg.? Why, then, should there not be volcanoes at the North Pole?"

"It is certainly possible."

"Ah!" cried the Doctor, again, "I can now see it distinctly; it is a volcano!"

"Well," said Hatteras "let us run right for it."

"The wind begins to head us," said Johnson.

"Then haul in your mainsheet, and make a tack."

But this had the effect of driving the boat away from the point they first sighted, and they could not make it out again. Still no one could doubt they were near the coast that was the object of their journey—seen if not reached, and four-and-twenty hours would not pass before this new land would be trodden for the first time by the foot of man. Surely Providence, after allowing them to get so near, would not oppose these audacious mariners' landing!

Still no one seemed to manifest the delight which such a discovery ought to cause; everyone seemed to be thinking what sort of land this might be at the Pole. Animals seemed to avoid it; in the evening the birds, instead of flying landward, made the best of their way to the south! Was it, then, so inhospitable a land that not a gull nor a ptarmigan could there find an asylum? The fish, even the whales, swam rapidly away from the coast. Whence arose, then, this feeling of repulsion, if not terror, common to all the animals which frequented this part of the globe?

The navigators all shared the general feeling, and they gave way to it till sleep closed their eyelids.

It was Hatteras's watch. He took the helm; the Doctor, Altamont, Johnson, and Bell were lying asleep on the thwarts. He himself tried to resist the temptation; he did not want to lose a moment of time now so precious; but the slight roll of the boat sent

him, in spite of himself, to sleep. The boat made hardly any way: there was not wind enough to fill her mainsail. Afar off some icebergs, motionless in the west, reflected the sun's rays and looked like burning patches on the ocean. Hatteras began to dream. His thoughts flew back to his past life, with that quickness of thought which no philosopher has yet been able to calculate; they turned to the days gone by, his wintering out, Victoria Bay, Fort Providence, Doctor's House, and finding the American under the ice.

Then they went still farther back; he dreamed of his ship, the burning of the "Forward," his companions, and the mutineers who deserted him—what had become of them? Had they got across the ice to Baffin's Bay? He thought of Shandon and Wall and that brute Pen.

His imagination then carried him back to his departure from England, his previous voyages, his abortive attempts, and his accidents and misfortunes. Then he forgot where he presently was, his near approach to success, and his half-realized hopes—his joy was turned to pain.

For two hours he continued dreaming in this manner; then his thoughts took another direction, and brought him back to the Pole. He saw himself standing on this new English continent, unfurling the flag of the United Kingdom.

While he was dozing thus, an enormous cloud, of an olive-green colour, rose above the horizon, and darkened the sea. No one can conceive the lightning-like rapidity with which hurricanes overtake the Arctic seas. The vapours engendered in Equatorial countries become condensed above the vast glaciers of the North, and create with irresistible violence masses of air to replace them. At the first gust the Captain and his friends were roused from sleep and at their posts.

The sea ran frightfully high, and the boat, tossed about by the swell, plunged deep down, to rise again the next minute on the crest of an enormous wave.

Hatteras had taken the helm, which sometimes, when the boat lurched, nearly threw him off his legs. Johnson and Bell were occupied in baling the boat, which took in a great deal of water in its repeated plunges.

"This storm we did not expect," said Altamont, holding on to his thwart.

"We may expect anything here," replied the Doctor.

These words were exchanged amidst the roaring of winds and waves, and it was almost impossible to hear oneself speak.

It was difficult to keep a northerly course; the mist prevented their seeing more than a few fathoms ahead. This gale, at the very moment they were so near attaining their object, seemed to bring a warning with it; it appeared to their over-excited minds to convey a prohibition against advancing any farther. Did Nature intend to interdict all access to the Pole? Was this point of the globe surrounded by a fortification of hurricanes and storms, which allowed no approach to it?

But it was easy to see by these men's faces that they would be prevented neither by winds nor waves from attaining their object.

So they struggled on; but just as the sea ran higher than ever, a sudden calm came on—the wind went down in a most miraculous manner. The sea became as calm as if a heavyswell had not agitated it for twelve hours; the hurricane seemed to have respected this part of the Polar ocean.

What was the cause? An extraordinary unaccountable phenomenon, which Captain Sabine had witnessed during his voyages in the Greenland seas.

The fog, without being dissipated, became strangely luminous.

The boat was sailing along in a zone of electric light—an immense ignis fatuus, brilliant but without heat. Mast, sails, and rigging were visible in their black outline against the phosphorescent background of the sky with incomparable clearness; the navigators themselves were plunged in a bath of transparent rays, and their faces were coloured red in the reflection. This sudden calm arose, doubtless, from the upward motion of columns of air, while the tempest, in its nature resembling a cyclone, was revolving round this undisturbed centre.

This fiery atmosphere brought an idea into the Captain's mind.

"The volcano!" he cried.

"Is it possible?" said Bell.

"No, no," replied the Doctor; "we should be suffocated if its flames were so near us."

"Perhaps it is its reflection on the fog," said Altamont

"Nothing else. We must have been tolerably near land, and, in that case, would hear the bellowing of the eruption."

“But then——” asked the Captain.

“It is a phenomenon which has hitherto been very little observed,” replied Clawbonny. “If we keep the same course, it will not be long before we sail out of this luminous sphere, to find ourselves again in storm and darkness.”

“Be it so, then ; but forward we go,” returned Hatteras.

“Forward,” cried his companions, who cared little now for resting themselves in this smooth basin.

The sail hung in sparkling folds from the mast ; they dipped their cars in the glittering waves, causing sparks to fly at every stroke.

Hatteras, compass in hand, kept a northerly course ; by degrees the fog lost its light, then its transparence ; they could hear the roaring of the wind a few yards distant, and then the boat, lying well over in a violent squall, re-entered the zone of the storm. But the hurricane had fortunately veered a point to the south, and the boat could run before it right for the Pole, although risking to fill and go down, but flying along before the wind ; should reef, rock, or blocks of ice rise above the waves, she must infallibly strike against them and go to pieces. But not one of these men raised an objection or said a word on the side of prudence ; danger had made them mad. A thirst for the unknown possessed them ; they were not blind, but blinded, and found the frightful rapidity of their course too slow to keep pace with their impatience. Hatteras kept a firm hand on the tiller in the midst of waves lashed into foam by the tempest.

They could now feel they were nearing the land ; there were strange symptoms in the air. The fog was suddenly rent open like a curtain, and during the space of a flash of lightning they could see an immense sheet of flame rising upward to the sky.

“The volcano ! the volcano !” escaped from the mouths of every man ; but the fantastic vision disappeared again ; the wind went round to the south-east, took the boat aback, and forced it once more to bear away from this inaccessible land.

“Curses on it !” cried Hatteras, hauling in his main-sheet ; “and we were not three miles from the shore !”

He could do nothing against the violence of the storm ; but, without running before it, he lay-to while it blew so hard ; sometimes the boat was down to her gunwale, so that they thought she must capsize ; then she came up again under the action of the rudder, like a horse who answers at once to his rider's leg and

hand. With his hair flying in the wind, Hatteras, grasping the tiller, seemed the soul of the boat, and to make but one with it, like the centaurs of old.

A frightful sight suddenly rose before them.

Less than ten fathoms distant, an iceberg was rising and falling in the swell, like the boat which it threatened to run down every moment.

Another danger, not less terrible, threatened them : this iceberg, driving about at the mercy of the winds and waves, had a crew of white bears on board, pressing close to one another, and mad with fright.

"Bears ! Look at the bears !" cried Bell, hoarsely.

They all looked in the direction he was pointing.

The iceberg lurched about **frightfully**; sometimes it rolled so much that the animals tumbled about, one over the other ; and then they howled in a manner which rivalled the roar of the storm, and a fearful concert was audible from this floating menagerie.

If this iceberg had capsized the bears would infallibly have attempted to board the boat.

For a quarter of an hour, which seemed an age, the boat and the iceberg sailed in company, sometimes twenty fathoms apart, sometimes nearly touching one another ; sometimes one was so near, that the bears had only to let themselves drop down. The Greenland dogs trembled, but "Duke" remained unmoved.

Hatteras and his companions had not said a word ; they made no attempt to quit their terrible neighbours, but they kept to their own course. A vague sentiment, more of astonishment than terror, had taken possession of their minds ; they admired this terrifying spectacle, which put a finishing touch to the struggle with the elements.

At last the iceberg gradually increased its distance, driven along before the wind, and disappeared in the fog, signalling her whereabouts from time to time by the distant howling of her monstrous crew.

At that moment the tempest raged with redoubled fury, and the boat began to turn round and round till they all felt giddy ; her sail was blown away to leeward like a great white bird, and a hole like that of the Maelstrom was formed by the eddy of the waves ; the navigators, enveloped in this whirlpool, flew round so quickly, that

its walls seemed stationary, in spite of their frightful rapidity. They sank down by degrees. At the bottom of the gulf an irresistible attraction was sucking them down, and swallowing them up alive.

They all five stood up, and looked about them in fear and trembling. A vertigo seized upon them, and they felt themselves going down to the bottom of the abyss.

But all at once the boat rose perpendicularly. Its bow had got out of the centre of attraction, and escaping by the tangent of the circumference which was making about a thousand turns in a second, it was shot outside of it with the rapidity of a cannon-ball. Altamont, the Doctor, Bell, and Johnson, were flung under the thwarts. When they recovered themselves, Hatteras was gone.

It was two in the morning.





CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FLAG OF ENGLAND.

A CRY from the lips of the four men succeeded a first moment of amazement.

"Hatteras!" cried the Doctor.

"Disappeared!" replied Johnson and Bell together.

"Lost!"

They looked all round. Nothing was to be seen on the swell of the sea. "Duke" barked and yelled; he wanted to jump into the water, and Bell had great difficulty in preventing him.

"Take the helm, Altamont, and let us do what we can to recover our unfortunate Captain."

Johnson and Bell took their places again, and Altamont took the tiller and soon brought the boat to the wind again. Johnson and Bell began to row vigorously. Their search was a vain one. Unfortunate Hatteras! he was lost—carried away by the hurricane.

Lost!—and so near the Pole!—so near the aim of all his ambition! The Doctor shouted, fired off his gun; "Duke" howled, but there was no reply to the Captain's two friends. Then profound grief overmastered Clawbonny; he let his head fall on his hands, and his companions could hear him weep.

At such a distance from land, without an oar or a piece of wood to support him, Hatteras could not have lived to gain the shore by any possibility; and if aught belonging to him ever reached this land so ardently sought for, it could only be his bruised and swollen corpse. After searching about for an hour, they turned again northward, to renew their struggle with the gale.

At five in the morning on the 11th of July the wind abated; the swell went down by degrees; the sky again assumed its Polar clear-

ness, and at less than three miles from them land appeared in all its splendour. This new continent was only an island, or, rather, a volcano set up as a lighthouse at the world's northern pole.

The mountain was in full eruption, vomiting burning stones and masses of rocks; it seemed agitated by violent shocks, like the respiration of a giant; stones were sent high in the air, accompanied by jets of flame, and floods of lava rolled impetuously down its sides; here flaming serpents wound along through smoking rocks, there cascades of fire fell back into the middle of a purple vapour, and lower down a fiery river, formed of a thousand blazing streams, threw itself into the sea.

The volcano seemed to have but one crater, whence a column of fire was constantly ascending, played upon by lightning. One might have said that electricity was playing a part in this magnificent phenomenon.

Above the flames there hung an immense canopy of smoke, red at its base and black at the summit. It rose most majestically and rolled away in massive scrolls.

The sky was the colour of ashes to a great height; the obscurity they had noticed during the storm, and which the Doctor could not explain, evidently proceeded from the columns of ashes unrolled before the sun as an impenetrable curtain. He recollected a similar fact occurring in 1812 at the island of Barbadoes, which at twelve in the day was plunged into profound darkness by the mass of ashes thrown up from the crater on the island of Saint Vincent.

This enormous volcanic rock, springing in mid-ocean, measured twelve thousand feet—about the same height as Hecla.

A line drawn from its summit to its base, formed with the horizon an angle of about eleven degrees.

It seemed to rise from the waves by degrees, as the boat came up to it. There was not the slightest appearance of vegetation: there was no beach, for its sides went straight down into the water.

"Can we land?" asked the Doctor.

"The wind drives us on to it," replied Altamont.

"But I see no shore on which we can set our feet."

"It seems so at a distance," replied Johnson; "but we shall find a place where we can haul our boat up, and that is enough."

"Let us try, then," said Clawbonny, sadly.

The Doctor no longer paid any attention to this strange continent

thus rising before him. The Pole of the world was there, but not the man who had discovered it. The sea was boiling under the action of subterranean fires five hundred yards from the rocks. The island might be about eight or ten miles in circumference—not more, and, according to calculation, it was very close to the Pole, if indeed the axis of the world did not pass through it.

As the navigators approached the island they noticed a small fiord in miniature just large enough to shelter their boat; they steered for it rather hesitatingly, for they dreaded to find the Captain's body cast ashore there by the storm.

It would have been difficult for a body to rest there, for there was no shore, and the sea beat on steep rocks, and a thick layer of ashes, free from all human traces, covered their surfaces above the water's edge.

At last the boat glided through an opening in the breakers, and there it was in perfect safety from the surf.

Then "Duke" began to howl again—the poor beast called for his master; he asked the pitiless sea for him, and the echoless rocks in vain. The Doctor in vain tried to quiet him by caresses; when the faithful dog sprang away from him, and landed the first among the rocks, raising a cloud of ashes around him.

"Duke! Duke!" called the Doctor. But "Duke" did not listen to him, and disappeared. They then proceeded to land, and the boat was made fast.

Altamont was about to scramble up a heap of stones, when "Duke's" bark was heard louder than ever, at some distance.

"Listen!" said the Doctor.

"Some animal has got up before him," said the boatswain.

"No, no," said the Doctor, trembling. "He has found his master's body—it must be there."

As he spoke the four men hurried after "Duke." Blinded by cinders, they arrived at the bottom of a fiord about ten feet wide, where the waves were breaking gently.

"Duke" was barking by the side of a body wrapped in the English colours.

"Hatteras! Hatteras!" cried the Doctor, throwing himself upon it. But he immediately gave a shout which it is impossible to describe, for he found the apparently inanimate and bleeding body was still palpitating.

"Alive! Alive!" he cried.

"Yes!" said a feeble voice, "alive on the land of the Pole, where the tempest tossed me. Alive in Queen's Island."

"Hurrah for England!" they all five cried together.

"And for America too," said the Doctor, giving one hand to Hatteras, and the other to Altamont.

"Duke" also cried "hurrah," after his own fashion, which was as good as another's. For the first few moments these brave men gave themselves up entirely to the joy of finding their captain again. The Doctor first examined his state, and found he was not severely injured. The wind had blown him ashore where the landing was very dangerous; the bold sailor had been swept out to sea several times, and succeeded at last in grappling a piece of rock, and clambering out of the reach of the waves. There he fainted away, after rolling himself up in his flag, and he only recovered consciousness at "Duke's" caresses, and heard him barking.

After some attention from the Doctor, Hatteras was able to rise and, leaning on Clawbonny, walk down to the boat.

"The Pole! the North Pole!" he repeated several times

"Now you are happy," said the Doctor to him.

"Happy, yes! And you, my friend, do you not feel what joy, what happiness it is to find yourself here? The earth we are walking upon is the land of the Pole. The sea we have just crossed is the Polar Sea; the air we are now breathing is Polar air! Oh, the North Pole! the North Pole!"

As he spoke Hatteras was under the influence of violent excitement and fever, and the Doctor tried in vain to quiet him; his eyes shone so brightly, and his brain was evidently overtaxed with what had happened. Clawbonny attributed this state of over-excitement to the frightful perils he had lately gone through.

Hatteras was evidently in want of rest, and they set about finding some spot where they could encamp.

Altamont soon came upon a grotto in the rocks; Johnson and Bell brought up the provisions and let the Greenland dogs loose.

About eleven everything was ready for a meal: the tent-cloth served for a table-cloth: the breakfast, consisting of pemmican, salt meat, tea, and coffee, was set out on the ground only waiting to be eaten.

But, first of all, Hatteras insisted that the position of the island should be ascertained, as he wanted to know it exactly.

The Doctor and Altamont took their instruments, and by observation they obtained the precise position of the grotto to be in latitude 89 deg. 59 min. 15 sec., the longitude at that height was of no importance, for all the meridians meet a few hundred feet higher.

Thus in reality the island was situated at the North Pole, and the ninetieth degree of latitude was only forty-five seconds from there; exactly three quarters of a mile, that is to say, to the top of the volcano.

When Hatteras knew this result he desired two copies might be made of it, which should be deposited in a cairn on the coast.

The Doctor therefore took his pen, and there drew up the following document, a copy of which is now in the archives of the Royal Geographical Society of London :—

“ July 11th, 1861, in North latitude 89 deg. 59 min. 15 sec.,
“ Queen’s Island was discovered at the North Pole by Captain
“ Hatteras, commander of the brig ‘Forward,’ of Liverpool, who
“ has signed it, with his companions. Whoever may find this document is requested to forward it to the Admiralty.

(Signed) “ JOHN HATTERAS, Commander of the ‘Forward.’

“ Doctor CLAWBONNY.

“ ALTAMONT, Commander of the ‘Porpoise.’

“ JOHNSON, Boatswain.

“ BELL, Carpenter.”





CHAPTER XXIV.

A COURSE OF POLAR COSMOGRAPHY.

TO take their places at the table they had to sit on the ground. "But," as Clawbonny observed, "who would not give all the dining-tables and all the dining-rooms in the world to be able to dine in latitude 89 deg. 59 min. 15 sec.?"

Each man's thoughts carried him to their present situation; their minds were completely occupied by the idea of the North Pole, the dangers braved in attaining it: the perils to be overcome in their return were forgotten in this unprecedented success. What neither the ancients nor the moderns, what neither Europeans, nor Americans, nor Asiatics had hitherto done, had just now been accomplished.

The Doctor, therefore, was listened to attentively while he related all that his science and his inexhaustible memory could furnish him with, in respect of their actual situation.

He first proposed the health of the Captain.

"John Hatteras' health!" he called out.

"John Hatteras' health!" all his companions repeated, unanimously.

"To the health of the North Pole," said the Captain, in a tone which, from a man hitherto so cool and self-restrained, and now in a state of great over-excitement, sounded strange. They then shook hands all round.

"This, then," said the Doctor, "is the most important geographical part of our epoch! Who would have said that this discovery would precede those of Central Africa or Central Australia? Really, Hatteras, you take a position above that of Livingstone, Burton, and Barth; all honour to you!"

"You are quite right, Doctor," said Altamont. "It seems to me,

from the difficulty of the undertaking, the North Pole is the last point in the world to be discovered. The day any Government absolutely desires to know the centre of Africa, it can succeed in doing so at a certain cost of men and money ; but here nothing is more uncertain than success, and obstacles absolutely insuperable might have been met."

"Insuperable !" cried Hatteras, vehemently ; "there are wills more or less energetic, but no insuperable obstacles."

"Well," said Johnson, "here we are at last, and so much the better. But, Mr. Clawbonny, will you be so good as to tell me what there is so particular about this Pole ?"

"Why, friend Johnson, it is the only motionless point on the globe, while all others turn with extreme rapidity."

"But I do not perceive," replied Johnson, "that we are more immovable here than at Liverpool."

"Because you are not more sensible of it at Liverpool than you are here ; because in both cases you participate in the movement or the repose, but the fact is no less certain. The earth is endowed with a rotatory motion, which is accomplished in twenty-four hours, and this motion is supposed to act upon an axis, the extremities of which pass from the North to the South Pole. Well, we are at one of the ends of this necessarily motionless axis."

"So," said Bell, "while our countrymen are turning rapidly we remain at rest ?"

"Almost so ; for we are not absolutely at the Pole."

"Yes, Doctor," said Hatteras, gravely shaking his head ; "we are still forty-five seconds from the exact spot."

"That is a trifle," observed Altamont, "and we may consider ourselves motionless."

"Yes," resumed the Doctor, while the inhabitants of each point of the Equator are going round three hundred and twenty-six leagues an hour "

"And that without any fatigue," said Bell.

"Exactly."

"But," said Johnson, "independently of that rotatory motion, does not the earth move round the sun ?"

"Yes, but it takes a year to complete it."

"Is it more rapid than the other ?"

"Infinitely more so, and I must tell you that though we are at the

Pole, it carries us with it like all the earth's inhabitants. Therefore our supposed immobility is only a delusion; we are so with respect to other points of the globe, but not so with regard to the sun."

"Good," said Bell, with a comical air of regret; "I thought I was in quiet now, and so I must give up that illusion; there is really no quiet to be found in this world."

"As you say, Bell," replied Johnson; "and now, Mr. Clawbonny, will you tell us how fast the earth moves round the sun?"

"At the rate of seven leagues and six-tenths any second."

"It is hardly credible, Mr. Clawbonny! More than seven leagues a second; and we might have been motionless all the time if God had so chosen!"

"What are you thinking of, Bell?" said Altamont; "then there would have been neither day, nor night, nor seasons."

"Without taking a frightful result into the calculation," added the Doctor.

"What?"

"That we should fall on the sun."

"Fall on the sun!" echoed Bell, in surprise.

"Of course, if the earth's motion round the sun was stopped, the earth would in sixty-four days and a half be hurled down on the sun. No more, no less, for it has a distance of thirty-eight million leagues to traverse."

"What is the weight of the terrestrial globe?" asked Altamont.

"Five thousand eight hundred and eighty-one million tons."

"Well," said Johnson, "these figures don't speak much to the ear, for they are past understanding."

"Then, my worthy friend, I will give you two terms of comparison which will fix themselves in your memory; recollect that it requires seventy-five moons to equal the weight of the earth, and three hundred and fifty thousand globes like ours to equal the weight of the sun."

"All that is crushing," said Altamont.

"Crushing is just the word. But to return to the Pole—since the cosmography of this part of the earth could not be more opportune—if you are tired of hearing about it——"

"Go on, Doctor, go on," said Altamont.

"I have already told you," continued the Doctor, who was as pleased to teach his companions as they were to learn, "I have said

the Pole was an immovable point with respect to other points of the earth; well, that was not quite exact, for the Pole is not always in the same place; the Polar star was formerly much further from the celestial Pole than it is now. Our Pole is therefore endowed with a certain degree of motion; it describes a circle in about twenty-six thousand years. That arises from the precession of the equinoxes. I will tell you of that by-and-by."

"But," said Altamont, "would it never happen that the Pole moved some day more rapidly?"

"Now, my dear Altamont, you have just put the great question which men of science were a long time discussing after a singular discovery. In 1771 the carcase of a rhinoceros was discovered on the shore of the Frozen Sea. In 1799 that of an elephant on the coast of Siberia. How did it happen that these inhabitants of warm countries were met with under such latitudes? Thence arose strange rumours among geologists who were not so clever as a Frenchman, M. Elie de Beaumont, was afterwards, who proved that these animals lived under elevated latitudes, and that torrents and rivers had carried their carcasses where they were found. But as at that time this opinion had not been made public, guess what theory men of science adopted?"

"They are capable of anything," said Altamont, laughing.

"Yes, when they want to explain a fact; they supposed the Pole had formerly been the Equator and the Equator the Pole."

"Nonsense!"

"They did so, seriously. Now if such had been the case, as the earth is flattened at the Pole for a depth of five leagues, the seas carried to the new equator by centrifugal force would have covered mountains twice as high as the Himalayas; all the countries near the Polar circle, Sweden, Norway, Russia, Siberia, Greenland and New Britain, would lie five leagues deep under water, while Equatorial regions transferred to the Pole would have formed a table-land five leagues above the rest of the world."

"What a change!" cried Johnson.

"Oh! men of science are afraid of nothing."

"And how did they account for this revolution?" asked Altamont.

"By collision with a comet. A comet is the '*Deus ex machinâ*.' Every time that a difficult explanation is required a comet is in-

voked. It is the most obliging star I know, and is always at the orders of men of science."

"Then, Mr. Clawbonny, in your opinion such a revolution was impossible?"

"Impossible; for if it ever happened the Equator would be frozen in twenty-four hours."

"Why," said Bell, "if that was to happen just now, people would be capable of denying we had even been to the Pole."

"Never fear, Bell. To return to the immobility of the terrestrial axis, this is the consequence; if we were to spend the winter here we should see the stars describe a perfect circle round us. The sun, at the spring equinox, the 23rd of March, would appear to us (I do not take refraction into consideration) cut exactly in two by the horizon, and would rise by degrees forming two extended curves; but here, as soon as it appears it sets no more—it remains visible for six months; then its disc again falls to the level of the horizon at the autumnal equinox on the 22nd of September, and as soon as it sets it is seen no more the whole winter."

"You were talking just now, Mr. Clawbonny, of the flattening of the earth at the Poles," said Johnson; "will you explain that?"

"The earth being but a fluid in the first days of creation, you must understand that its rotatory motion then would set part of its mobile mass to the Equator, where its centrifugal force would be felt the most. If the earth had been motionless it would have formed a perfect sphere; but in consequence of the phenomenon I have just described it presents an ellipsoidal form, and the points of the Pole are five leagues or so nearer the centre than the points of the Equator."

"Then," said Johnson, "if the Captain wanted to take us to the centre of the earth, we should have five leagues less to go?"

"As you say, my friend."

"Well, Captain, that is so much gained; this is an opportunity we ought——"

Hatteras made no reply: he either did not hear, or did not attend to, the conversation.

"From what certain men of science assert, it would perhaps be worth while to attempt it," said the Doctor; "but let me finish and I will tell you about that afterwards. I want now to explain how the flattening of the Poles occasions the precession of the equinoxes—

that is to say, why every year the spring equinox arrives a day sooner than it would if the earth were perfectly round. That is simply the consequence of the sun's attraction operating differently on the round portion of the globe situated at the Equator, which thus experiences a retrograde movement. Subsequently it is that which displaces the Pole a little, as I explained to you before ; but, independently of this effect, the flattening ought to have another, more personal and more curious, and if we were gifted with mathematical sensibility we should feel it."

"What do you mean?" said Bell.

"That we are heavier here than we are at Liverpool."

"Heavier?"

"Yes, ourselves, our dogs, guns, and instruments ; and for two reasons : the first, that we are nearer the centre of the globe, which consequently attracts us more ; now, this force of attraction is nothing more than weight. The second is rotatory force ; which is nothing at the Pole, but very great at the Equator : objects there have a tendency to fly away from the earth, and are consequently less heavy."

"But," said Johnson, seriously, "don't we weigh the same everywhere?"

"No, Johnson ; according to Newton's law, bodies attract one another in direct proportion to their bulk, and in an inverse ratio to the square of their distances. Here I am heavier, because I am nearer the centre of attraction, and on another planet I should weigh more or less, according to the weight of the planet."

"What!" said Bell—"in the moon——?"

"In the moon, my weight, which is at Liverpool two hundred pounds, would be thirty-two only."

"And in the sun?"

"In the sun I should weigh more than five hundred pounds!"

"Good Heavens!" said Bell. "One would want a screw-jack to raise one's leg."

"Probably," said the Doctor, laughing at Bell's astonishment : "but here the difference is not perceptible, and with an equal exertion of strength Bell would jump as high as he could on the quays of the Mersey."

"Yes, but in the sun?" said Bell, sticking to the question.

"My friend," replied the Doctor, "the natural consequence of

all this is that we are very well where we are, and that it is useless to want to go elsewhere."

"You were saying just now," observed Altamont, "that it would perhaps be worth while attempting an excursion to the centre of the earth? Has no one ever conceived the idea of such an expedition?"

"Yes, and that concludes all I had to say about the Pole. No point in the world has given rise to more hypotheses and conjectures. The ancients, who were very ignorant of cosmography, placed the Hesperides there. In the Middle Ages, it was supposed the world was supported on spindles placed at the poles, on which it turned; but when comets were seen to move freely in the regions about the Pole, they were obliged to abandon that theory. Then in later times a French astronomer named Bailly maintained that the Atlantides, a race of men spoken of by Plato, lived here. Lastly, in our days, it has been pretended that a large open space existed at the Poles, whence the light of the aurora borealis issued, and by which it was possible to penetrate to the interior of the globe; then in the hollow sphere they imagined the existence of two planets, Pluto and Proserpine, and a luminous air caused by the pressure experienced."

"Has all that been asserted?" asked Altamont.

"And written too, and quite in earnest. Captain Synness, one of our countrymen, offered to Humphrey Davy, Humboldt, and Arago, to undertake the journey, but they declined his offer."

"They were right in doing so."

"I think so too. Be that as it may, you see, my friends, that imagination has run quite free with regard to the Pole, and that, sooner or later, we must fall back on the plain fact."

"Besides, we shall see for ourselves," said Johnson, who would not relinquish his idea.

"Then to-morrow we will begin our excursion," said the Doctor, smiling to see the old sailor still unconvinced, "and if there is an opening especially adapted for a descent into the bowels of the earth, we will go down there together."



CHAPTER XXV.

AFTER this matter-of-fact conversation each man made himself as comfortable as he could in the grotto, and soon went to sleep—everyone but Hatteras. Why was not that extraordinary man asleep? Had he not attained the object of his life? Had he not accomplished the hazardous projects which lay so near his heart? Why did not calm succeed agitation in his ardent soul? Would not one have thought that, once his projects accomplished, Hatteras would have sunk into a state of quietude, and that his over-strained nerves would require repose? It only seemed natural that he should experience that feeling of sadness after success, the natural result of satisfied desires.

But no. He seemed more excited than ever. It was no thought of the return journey which agitated him thus. Did he want to go still farther? Were there no limits to his ambition as a traveller? And did he find the world too small because he had discovered the end of it?

However, so it was; he could not sleep. And yet this first night passed at the Pole of the earth was pure and still. The island was quite uninhabited. Not a bird was visible in its heated atmosphere, not an animal on its soil of ashes, not a fish in its boiling waters; not a sound at a distance but the dull roar of the mountain, with its canopy of fire and smoke.

When Bell, Johnson, Altamont and the Doctor awoke they missed Hatteras. Uneasy, they left the grotto, and saw the Captain standing on a rock. His eyes were fixed on the summit of the volcano. He had his instruments in his hand. He had evidently been taking an observation.

The Doctor went and spoke to him several times before he could attract his attention. At last the Captain seemed to understand him.

"Come," said the Doctor, who was examining him attentively, "come, let us make a tour of our island; here we are, ready for our last excursion."

"Our last," repeated Hatteras, in the tone of voice peculiar to people who dream aloud, "yes, the last indeed; but also, he added, with great animation, the most marvellous!"

As he spoke he pressed both his hands to his forehead, as if to calm the workings of his brain.

At that moment Altamont, Bell, and Johnson joined them, and Hatteras seemed to shake off his state of hallucination.

"My friends," said he, affectionately, "thanks for your courage, your perseverance, your more than human exertions, which have allowed us to set foot on this ground."

"Captain," said Johnson, "we have only obeyed you—the honour belongs to you only."

"No, no," replied Hatteras, warmly, "to all of you as much as to myself, or to the Doctor himself. My heart is too full to contain the love and gratitude I feel now to you all."

Hatteras pressed his brave companions' hands between his own as they stood round him. He walked up and down; he could not contain himself.

"We have done our duty as Englishmen," said Bell.

"And as friends," said the Doctor.

"Yes," returned Hatteras, "but that duty—all did not do it; some failed! But we must pardon those who betrayed, and those who let themselves be led into treason, both alike. Poor men! I forgive them. You hear, Doctor!"

"Yes," replied the Doctor, very uneasy at Hatteras's increasing excitement.

"For that reason," continued the Captain, "I do not intend that the little fortune they came so far to find should be lost. No, I shall make no change in my arrangements, and they will be rich . . . if they ever see England again."

It would have been difficult not to be affected at the tone and manner with which Hatteras spoke these words.

"But, Captain," said Johnson, trying to make light of it, "one would say you were making your will."

"Perhaps I am," replied Hatteras, gravely.

"You have a long and glorious existence before you still," said the old sailor.

"Who knows?" replied Hatteras.

These words were followed by a long silence. The Doctor did not dare attempt to interpret their meaning.

But Hatteras soon made them understand his meaning, for in a hurried voice he exclaimed:—

"Listen to me, my friends. We have done a great deal up to the present moment, and yet a great deal remains to be done."

The Captain's companions looked at him with amazement.

"Yes, we are on the land of the Pole, but not at the Pole itself."

"What can you mean?" asked Altamont.

"How?" cried the Doctor, who was afraid to understand him.

"Yes," Hatteras went on, hurriedly, "I have said an Englishman should set foot on the Pole of the world, and an Englishman shall do it. We are still forty-five seconds from the precise spot, and there, there I shall go!"

"But it is on the summit of this volcano!" cried the Doctor.

"I shall go."

"The cone is inaccessible!"

"I shall go."

"And the crater is open, and vomiting fire and lava!"

"I shall go."

"The energetic conviction with which Hatteras uttered these last words cannot be expressed. His friends were stupefied. They looked with terror at the mountain rising into the air with its flaming canopy.

The Doctor did his best to divert Hatteras from his idea; but all he said had no effect on the nervous soul of the Captain, now under the influence of a sort of Polar madness.

Violent measures only could have stopped this madman, now bent on rushing to his own destruction; but as the results of such a course might be very serious, the Doctor would not employ them but at the very last moment. He was also in hopes that some insurmountable obstacle might render it impossible for Hatteras to execute his project.

"The best thing we can do is to follow you," said he.

"Yes," said the Captain, "half-way up the mountain; no

farther. Have you forgotten you have to take a copy of the official report of our discovery to England, if——”

“Nevertheless——”

“That is settled,” replied Hatteras, conclusively; “and if a friend’s entreaties are not sufficient, your Captain commands you.”

The Doctor resisted no longer; and a few instants afterwards the little troop, equipped for a difficult ascent, and, preceded by “Duke,” set out.

The sky was brilliant. The thermometer was 52 deg. above zero. The clearness of the atmosphere was peculiar to that high degree of latitude. It was eight in the morning.

Hatteras went on ahead, with his dog. Bell, Johnson, Altamont, and the Doctor were close behind him.

“I am afraid,” said Johnson.

“No, no, there is nothing to fear,” said the Doctor; “we are with him.”

How give a description of this singular island; its peculiar physiognomy, its novelty, and its youth! The volcano seemed only of recent origin, and geologists might have assigned a recent date to its formation. The rocks only kept where they were by a miracle of equilibrium; the mountain was but a heap of stones—no soil, not the slightest moss, not the poorest lichen, not a trace of vegetation. Carbonic acid, vomited by the crater, had not yet had time to unite with the hydrogen of the water nor the ammonia of the clouds to form organic matter under the action of light. This island, lost in the sea, was only due to the successive aggregation of volcanic discharges; many mountains on the globe are formed thus; they are constructed by themselves. Such is Etna, which has already vomited a quantity of lava greater than its own bulk; or Monte-Nuovo, near Naples, consisting of scoria only, created in the short space of forty-eight hours.

This mass of rocks of which Queen’s Island was composed had evidently come from the bowels of the earth; it had the Plutonian character in the highest degree. In its place the immense sea extended formerly, formed from the first days of creation by the condensation of vapours over the cooling globe; but as the volcanoes of the old and new world were extinguished, or rather stopped up, they must naturally have been replaced by other active craters.

The earth may be compared to a vast round boiler, in which

immense quantities of vapours are generated and held at a tension of thousands of atmospheres, and which would burst the globe if it were not for the safely-valves at different places in the exterior.

These valves are volcanoes; when one is closed another is opened, and near the Pole, where, no doubt in consequence of the flattening, the terrestrial crust is thinner, it is not surprising that a volcano should have suddenly raised itself above the waters.

The Doctor noticed these strange peculiarities as he followed Hatteras; his foot pressed volcanic tufa and volcanic deposits resembling the syenites and granites of Iceland.

But if he attributed a nearly modern origin to this island, it was because sedimentary soil had not yet had time to form itself there.

There was water there. If Queen's Island had reckoned many ages of existence, thermal springs would have been bubbling up, as is usual in the vicinity of volcanoes. Now, not only was there not a drop of water, but the vapours which hung above the streams of lava seemed to be absolutely without moisture also.

This island, therefore, was of recent formation; and as it appeared one day, so it might disappear the next, and sink again to the bottom of the ocean.

The ascent became more difficult the higher they went; the sides of the mountain became nearly perpendicular, and they had to take great precautions to avoid being struck down by falling rocks and stones. Showers of ashes were sometimes whirled round the travellers, and threatened to suffocate them, while torrents of lava arrested their passage. They were constantly obliged to sound the ground as they went, to avoid being plunged into streams of burning lava. From time to time the crater hurled up masses of rock red-hot from ignited gas; some of these masses burst like shells in the air, and their fragments were scattered to a great distance in all directions.

The dangers thus incurred by ascending the mountain may therefore be easily understood, and how mad he must have been to attempt it.

Hatteras, however, continued climbing it with surprising activity, and disdaining the assistance of his pole, he ascended the steepest slopes without hesitation.

He soon arrived on a round rock about ten feet wide; a river of heated matter surrounded it; after having been divided in two by a

ridge of rock above, and only left a narrow passage, which Hatteras boldly crossed.

There he stopped, and his companions were able to come up with him. Horizontally he was not more than six hundred feet from the crater, that is to say from the mathematical point of the Pole; but vertically there was more than fifteen hundred feet to ascend.

The ascent had already lasted three hours. Hatteras did not seem fatigued, but the others were quite exhausted.

The summit appeared quite inaccessible. The Doctor was determined at any price to prevent Hatteras going any higher. He first tried persuasion; but the Captain's excitement was bordering on delirium. On the way he gave signs of increasing madness, and whoever had known him and had followed him in the different phases of his existence could not be surprised at it. In proportion as he ascended above the level of the ocean, so did his excitement increase; he was no longer living in the region of men; he believed he was growing with the mountain itself.

"Hatteras!" said the Doctor to him, "Enough! We can get no farther."

"Stay where you are, then," replied the Captain, in a strange voice; "I am going higher."

"No! What you are doing now is useless; you are at the Pole, here."

"No; higher still."

"My friend, it is I, Clawbonny, who is speaking to you. Don't you know me?"

"Higher still, higher still," repeated the madman.

"Then we will not allow you——"

The Doctor had not said these words before Hatteras, with an extraordinary effort, sprang up across the stream of lava, and was beyond reach of his companions.

They all called out, for they thought Hatteras had fallen into the fiery abyss; but he was on the other side of it, followed by "Duke," who would not leave him.

He disappeared behind a curtain of smoke, and they could hear his voice in the distance, shouting:—

"To the north! To the north! To the top of Mount Hatteras!"

They could not attempt to rejoin him. There were twenty chances to one against their passing where he had done with the good

fortune peculiar to mad persons; they could neither cross this flaming torrent, nor go round it. Altamont made a vain attempt to pass. He nearly lost his life in trying to cross the lava. His companions were obliged to use violence to restrain him.

"Hatteras! Hatteras!" the Doctor continued calling; but no Hatteras replied, and they could only at times hear "Duke" barking on the mountain's side.

Sometimes they could just distinguish him through the columns of smoke or showers of cinders. Then he would disappear, and again be visible clinging to the rocks' sides. His height diminished with the rapidity of objects rising in the air. Half-an-hour afterwards he seemed but half his size.

The atmosphere was filled with the dull noise of the volcano; the mountain roared like a boiler; they could feel the convulsive motion of its flanks. Hatteras was still climbing up and "Duke" was following him.

From time to time rocks and stones went thundering down behind him, and one enormous mass of rock, increasing in velocity as it fell, bounded from ridge to ridge, till it plunged to the bottom of the Polar basin.

Hatteras never once looked back; he had made use of his pole as a flagstaff for the English colours. His terrified companions watched his every movement. There was a moment when the wind blew a wide curtain of flame over them. The Doctor cried out in horror; but Hatteras reappeared erect and waving his flag.

The spectacle of this frightful ascent lasted more than an hour—an hour of struggling against quaking rocks, and with beds of ashes into which this hero of the impossible sometimes disappeared up to his waist. Sometimes he crept upon his hands and knees, sometimes he let himself swing by his hands down on some ridge of rock, and hung in the wind like a dry tuft of grass.

At last he reached the crater's orifice at the very summit of the volcano. The Doctor was then in hopes that the poor fellow, having attained his object, would turn to descend, and then the descent would be his only danger. He called out once more, "Hatteras! Hatteras!" in such a despairing tone, that Altamont was so much moved that he called out:—

"I will save him!" and then, with a bound, he cleared the torrent of lava, and disappeared among the rocks.

Clawbonny had not time to stop him.

Hatteras was now at the apex of the mountain, and was moving along a rock which overlooked the fiery gulf. Stones were raining around him, and "Duke" still followed him, though the poor beast seemed to feel the giddy attraction of the abyss. Hatteras was waving his flag, which was lighted up by the reflection of the flames from the crater. He was balancing it with one hand while with the other he pointed to the Pole of the celestial sphere in the zenith. He then seemed to hesitate. He was still seeking for the mathematical point where all the meridians of the globe met, on which, in his sublime madness, he sought to set his foot.

Suddenly the rock gave way under him, and he disappeared. His frightened companions' cry reached the very summit of the mountain. A second—an age, elapsed. Clawbonny thought his friend was lost, and buried for ever in the depths of the volcano. But Altamont was there, and "Duke" too. The man and the dog together had grappled the poor fellow the moment he was about to disappear down the abyss. Hatteras was saved; saved in spite of himself; and half-an-hour afterwards the Captain of the "Forward" was lying insensible in the arms of his distressed companions.

When he came to himself the Doctor looked at his face with mute anxiety; but that unconscious gaze, like that of the blind man who sees nothing he looks at, gave him no answer.

"Great God!" cried Johnson, "he is blind!"

"No!" replied Clawbonny, "No! my poor friends, we have only saved the body of Hatteras. His soul has remained on that volcano's summit. His reason is gone!"

"Mad!" cried Johnson and Altamont together, in consternation, "mad?"

"Mad!" replied the Doctor, while big tears fell from his eyes.





CHAPTER XXVI.

THE RETURN TO THE SOUTH.

THREE hours after this sad conclusion to the adventures of Captain Hatteras, Clawbonny, Altamont, and the two sailors were together in the grotto at the foot of the volcano.

There Clawbonny was requested to give his opinion as to what they had better do.

"My friends," said he, "we cannot prolong our stay on Queen's Island; the sea is open before us; we have a sufficiency of provisions; we must get back to Fort Providence as fast as we can, where we will winter, and stay until the following summer."

"I am of the same opinion," replied Altamont; "there is a fair wind; we ought to go to sea to-morrow."

The day was a sad one. The Captain's madness was an evil omen, and when Johnson, Bell, and Altamont thought of the journey back they were frightened at their abandoned condition, and the distance terrified them. They missed the intrepid spirit of Hatteras.

But, like energetic men, they prepared to struggle once more against the elements—and against themselves, if they ever found themselves about to give way.

The next day, Saturday, the 13th of July, all their baggage was embarked, and they were soon ready to start.

But before leaving that rock they were never to see again, the Doctor, in accordance with the intentions of Hatteras, raised a cairn at the very point where the Captain had landed on the island. It was built of large blocks laid one upon another, so as to form a very visible landmark, if the eruption should chance to spare it.

In one of the side stones Bell engraved with his chisel this simple inscription—

JOHN HATTERAS,

1861.

A copy of the document was deposited in the cairn in a tin tube perfectly tight, and the evidence of this great discovery was thus left to itself on these desert rocks.

Then the four men and the Captain—a poor soulless body—and his faithful “Duke” sadly embarked on their return voyage.

It was ten in the morning. They had made a new sail out of the tent-cloth. The boat, with the wind astern, soon left Queen’s Island, and in the evening the Doctor, standing up on the thwarts, waved his adieux to Mount Hatteras, blazing away on the horizon. They had a quick passage; the sea was quite open, and its navigation easy, and it really seemed easier to get away from the Pole than to arrive at it.

But Hatteras was in no state to understand what was passing around him; he remained lying along the bottom of the boat, silent, with a dull look, and his arms across his heart. “Duke” lay at his feet. It was useless for the Doctor to speak to him. He heard him not.

For forty-eight hours they had a favourable breeze and little or no swell. Clawbonny and his friends kept on their course before the north wind.

The 15th of July they sighted Altamont Harbour to the southward, but as the Polar Ocean was clear of ice all along the coast, instead of crossing New America by land with a sledge, they decided on going round the coast and reaching Victoria Bay by sea. It was a quicker and an easier route. It only took eight days in a boat to accomplish what had taken them fifteen days to do in a sledge, and after following the sinuosities of a coast with numerous fiords, the configuration of which they ascertained, they arrived on Monday evening, the 23rd of July, in Victoria Bay.

The boat was made fast, and they all hurried up to Fort Providence. But what a scene of devastation! Doctor’s House, store-houses, powder-magazine, fortifications—all had dissolved into water under the action of the solar rays, and the provisions had been pillaged by beasts of prey.

It was a sad spectacle.

The navigators were nearly at the end of their supply of provisions, and they had calculated on renewing them at Fort Providence. It was evidently impossible to pass the winter there now. Like men accustomed to come to a prompt decision, they resolved to get to Baffin's Bay by the shortest route.

'There is no other alternative,' said the Doctor. "Baffin's Bay is only six hundred miles: we can go by boat as long as there is water for us, get to Jones Strait, and thence to the Danish settlement."

"Yes," replied Altamont. "Let us get together what provisions remain and be off at once."

On looking about them they found a few boxes of pemmican lying about, and two casks of preserved meat, which had escaped destruction—together, food for six weeks and plenty of powder. All that was quickly got together that day; they caulked the boat, repaired it, and the next morning, July the 24th, they put to sea again.

Towards the 83rd degree of latitude the continent inclined eastwards. It was possible it was connected with the land known as Grinnel Land, Ellesmere Land, and North Lincoln Land, which form the coast-line of Baffin's Bay. It might therefore be considered certain that Jones Strait opened into inland seas, like Lancaster Sound.

The boat sailed on without any great difficulty; it easily kept clear of floating ice. The Doctor, in anticipation of delays, put his companions on half-rations; but altogether they suffered very little from fatigue, and their health remained good. They occasionally shot a few ducks, geese, and guillemots, which supplied them with fresh food. As for their supply of water, they easily renewed it from the fresh-water icebergs they encountered on their passage, for they took care to keep along the coast, their boat not being adapted to the open sea.

At that period of the year the thermometer remained constantly below freezing-point; dull weather with snow succeeded rain; the sun began to graze the horizon, and its disc lost more of its dimensions every day. The 30th of July they lost sight of it for the first time—that is to say, they had a few minutes' night. Still the boat carried them along well, sometimes making runs of sixty to sixty-

five miles in the twenty-four hours. They never stopped a moment; they were well aware what fatigue to support, and what dangers to overcome, a land journey would expose them to, if they were compelled to take to it; and while these enclosed seas would not be long before they were closed up; young ice was already forming here and there. Winter follows summer very abruptly in these high latitudes; there is neither spring nor autumn, the intermediate seasons are entirely wanting. They had, therefore, good reasons for haste.

On the 31st of July, the sky being clear at sunset, they could see the first stars in the constellations of the zenith. From that day it was constantly foggy, which made navigation more difficult.

The Doctor became very uneasy at seeing the symptoms of winter multiply; he knew what difficulty Sir John Ross experienced in getting to Baffin's Bay, after abandoning his ship; and even after trying to cross the ice the first time he was obliged to return to his ship and winter there a fourth time; but, at all events, he had shelter from the bad weather, food and fuel.

Should such a misfortune happen to the survivors of the "Forward," if they were compelled either to stop or to retrace their steps, they were lost men. The Doctor said nothing about his fears to his companions, but he urged them to get to the east as soon as possible.

At last, on the 25th of August, after a quick passage of thirty days, and struggling, for forty-eight hours, against the ice which had accumulated in the passes, after having risked their frail boat a hundred times, the navigators found themselves absolutely prevented going any farther. The sea was frozen in all directions, and the thermometer was only 15 deg. above zero.

They could easily recognize the vicinity of land to the northward and eastward by the small flat and rounded pebbles left by the waves on the beach; and fresh-water ice was also more frequently met with. Altamont took his observations most accurately, and found they were in latitude 77 deg. 15 min., and longitude 85 deg. 02 min.

"This, then," said the Doctor, "is our exact position; we have got to North Lincoln, and are exactly at Cape Eden; we are now entering Jones Strait; with a little more luck we should have found the sea open as far as Baffin's Bay. But we have no right to complain. If my poor friend Hatteras had met with so little difficulty

in this sea, he would soon have been at the Pole. His crew would not have abandoned him, and he would not have lost his head in consequence of his terrible anxieties."

"Now," said Altamont, "there is only one course left: we must abandon the boat, and reach the east coast of Lincoln with the sledge."

"Abandon the boat and take to the sledge; but, instead of crossing Lincoln, I propose to cross Jones Strait on the ice and gain North Devon."

"Why?" asked Altamont.

"Because the nearer we shall be getting to Lancaster Sound, the better chance we shall have in falling in with a whaling ship."

"You are quite right, Doctor, but I fear the ice will not be solid enough yet to afford us a passage."

"Let us try."

The boat was discharged. Bell and Johnson put the sledge together. The next day the dogs were harnessed again, and they set off along the coast for the ice-field.

Then they began this journey again, so often described, fatiguing and slow as it always is. Altamont was right in distrusting the state of the ice; they could not cross Jones Strait, and were obliged to make for the coast of Lincoln.

On the 21st of August the travellers, by cutting off an angle, reached the entrance of Glacier Strait; there they set off across the ice-field, and the next day they arrived at Cobourg Island, which they crossed in less than two days in a snowstorm. They were then able to follow the easiest route over the fields of ice, and at last, on the 24th of August, they set foot on North Devon.

"Now," said the Doctor, "we have only to cross this land and gain Cape Warrender, at the entrance of Lancaster Sound."

But the weather became very bad and very cold; squalls of snow and wind began again with their wintry violence. The travellers began to find themselves nearly worn out; their provisions were failing them, and they put themselves on one-third rations, in order to feed the dogs as they required for the work they had to do.

The nature of the ground, too, greatly added to the fatigue of the journey; the soil of North Devon is extremely broken. They had to cross the Tranter Mountains through impracticable gorges, while they struggled against the violence of the elements.

Sledge, men, and dogs were nearly left there altogether, and more than once despair took possession of the little troop, hardened as they were to the fatigues of a Polar expedition. Even, without knowing it themselves, these poor men were worn out, physically as well as morally. Eighteen months' incessant fatigue, and the excitement of a succession of hopes and fears, are not gone through with impunity. Besides, it must not be forgotten, that the energy and conviction which stimulated them on setting out were wanting on their return journey. The poor fellows could hardly drag themselves along; they seemed to walk mechanically, with a remainder of animal energy totally independent of their own will.

It was only on the 30th of August that they left their mountain chaos, and they left it worn, bruised, and half-frozen. The Doctor could not suffice to support his companions, for he felt himself failing also.

The Tranter Mountains ended in a plain broken up by the primitive upheaval of the mountain.

Here they were obliged to rest for a few days—they could not put one foot before the other; two of their dogs had died of exhaustion. They sheltered themselves behind an iceberg, in a cold two degrees below zero: not one of them was strong enough to pitch the tent.

Their provisions were very low, and, in spite of their rigid economy, they would only last a week longer; game was getting scarce, and was seeking a winter in milder climates. Death by hunger rose threateningly before its exhausted victims.

Altamont, who had all through shown great self-denial and great devotion to his friends, resolved to profit by what strength he had left to try and shoot something for his hungry companions. He took his gun, called "Duke," and went off towards the northern plain. Johnson, Bell, and the Doctor hardly noticed his departure. For an hour they never heard the report of his gun, and they saw him return without having fired a shot. The American, when back again, looked terribly frightened.

"What's the matter?" asked the Doctor.

"Down there, under the snow," replied Altamont, pointing to a spot in the horizon.

"What?"

"A whole detachment of men —!"

"Alive?"

"Dead! frozen! and even ——"

The American dared not finish his sentence, but his face expressed the utmost horror. The Doctor, Bell, and Johnson roused themselves to follow the traces of Altamont to the spot pointed out, which was at the bottom of a ravine, and there what a spectacle met their eyes. Bodies half-buried in a white shroud, protuded here and there from a layer of snow; arms, legs, hands clasped together, and faces still preserving an expression of despair or defiance.

The Doctor went closer, and then stepped back, looking pale and horror-struck, while "Duke" uttered howls of fear.

"Horrible!" said he, "most horrible!"

"What are they?" asked the Boatswain

"Go and see!"

This ravine had once been the scene of a last struggle between men and the climate, despair, and even hunger: for, from certain horrid remains, they could see these wretches had been reduced to the last resource against starvation. Among them the Doctor had recognized Shandon, Pen, and the miserable crew of the "Forward." Their strength had failed them; their provisions were all gone; their boat probably crushed by an avalanche or precipitated down a precipice, so that they had never reached the open sea; probably they lost themselves in these unknown continents. Besides, men who had left their ship under the excitement of mutiny would not long preserve that unity of purpose which would alone allow them to accomplish anything great. The chief of a band of mutineers could hold but a very doubtful rule over them, and no doubt Shandon was very soon set aside. The crew must evidently have gone through frightful torments and despair to arrive at this terrible catastrophe; but the secret of their miseries is buried for all time in Polar snow.

"Let us begone hence," said the Doctor, hastily, and he dragged his companions with him from that disastrous scene. Horror lent them a momentary energy. They set out once more.





CHAPTER XXVII.

CONCLUSION.

IT will serve no good purpose to lay any further stress on the misfortunes which so ceaselessly attended the survivors of the expedition. They themselves could never recall to memory the details of the week which passed after the discovery of the remains of the crew ; but, on the 9th of September, by a miracle of energy, they found themselves at Cape Horsburgh, at the extremity of North Devon.

They were dying of hunger ; not having touched food for forty-eight hours, and their last meal had been their last Esquimaux dog. Bell could go no farther, and poor old Johnson felt he should die. They were on the shores of Baffin's Bay, which was partly frozen—that is to say, so far on their way home ; three miles from the coast the waves were breaking over the ridges of the ice-field.

They had to wait the doubtful passing-by of a whaler, and for how many days ? . . . But Heaven took pity on these poor fellows, for the next day Altamont distinctly saw a sail on the horizon.

The anguish that accompanies the sight of a ship, the fears and disappointed hopes, are all well known. The vessel seemed to come nearer, and then to sail away again. There are horrible alternatives of hope and despair, and too often when the shipwrecked sailors think themselves saved, the vessel disappears below the horizon.

The Doctor and his companions went through all these trials ; they had reached the western edge of the ice-field, helping one another along, and they saw the vessel disappearing without having remarked their presence. They shouted, but in vain.

Then the Doctor was inspired, for the last time, with an idea to save himself and his friends.

An iceberg was driven by the current against the ice-field.

"That iceberg," said he, pointing to it, "let us get on board it."

"Let us get on board it!" they all cried out at once.

It was a gleam of hope to all.

"Ah! Mr. Clawbonny," said Johnson, embracing the Doctor.

Bell and Altamont hurried to the sledge. They brought one of the runners and set it up on the iceberg as a mast, and stayed it, while the tent was torn up to make a sail. The wind was fair, and the poor fellows hurried on board their fragile raft and put to sea.

Two hours afterwards the last remains of the "Forward's" crew were taken on board the Danish whaler the "Hans Christian," which was bound for Davis Straits. The captain very kindly received these spectres, who had hardly any appearance of human beings; he understood their story, overwhelmed them with attentions, and succeeded in saving their lives.

Ten days afterwards Clawbonny, Johnson, Bell, Altamont, and Captain Hatteras disembarked at Korsœur in Zeeland in Denmark; a steamer took them to Kiel; thence, by Altona and Hamburg, they reached London, where they arrived the 13th of the same month, hardly recovered from their long privations.

The Doctor's first care was to request permission to make a communication to the Royal Geographical Society: he was admitted to the next sitting. The astonishment of this learned assembly, and enthusiasm when Hatteras' document was read, may be imagined.

This unique voyage, without precedent in history, comprehended all former discoveries in circumpolar regions; it connected the expeditions of Parry, Ross, Franklin, and McClure; it completed the map of hyperborean regions between the hundredth and the hundred and fifteenth meridian, and it ended at that hitherto inaccessible point of the globe—the North Pole itself.

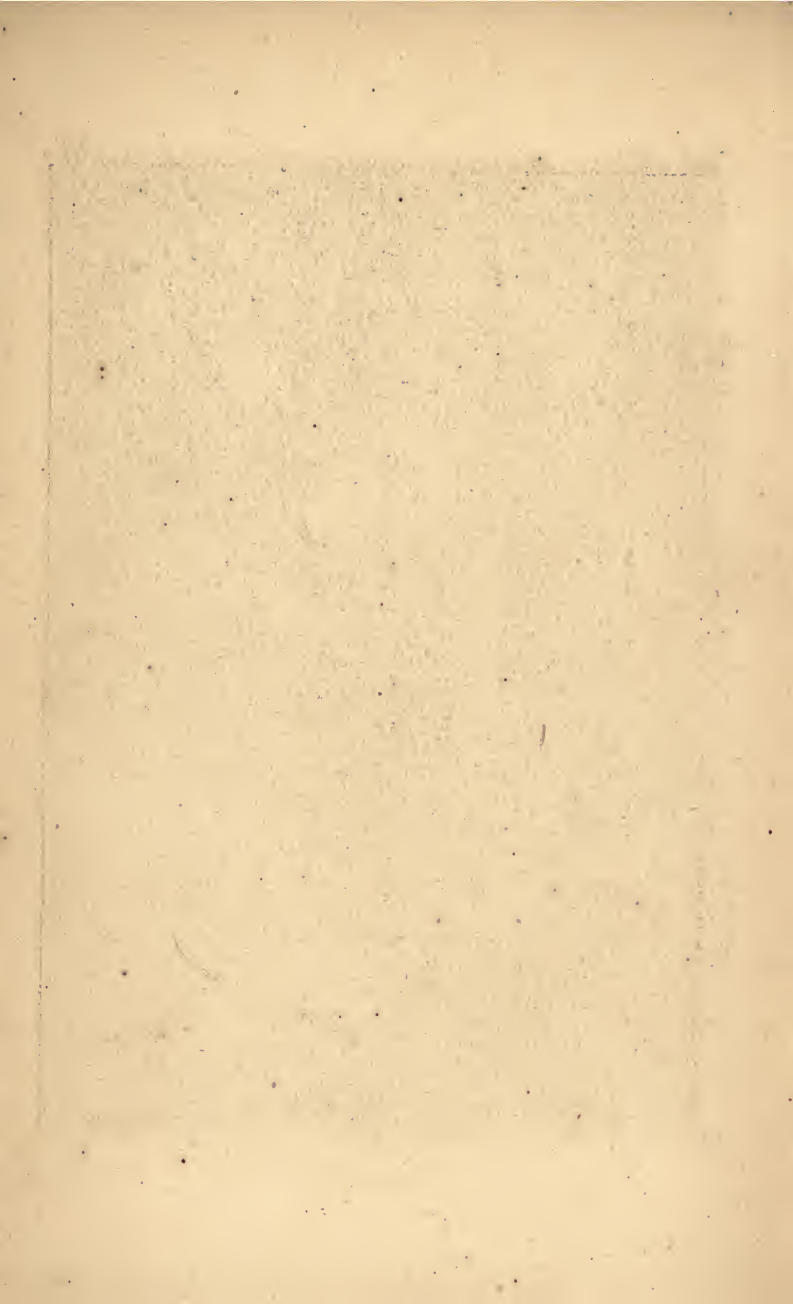
Such unexpected news had never burst upon astonished England. The English are passionately fond of great geographical facts. from the lord to the cockney; from the merchant-prince to the dock-labourer, they were all equally delighted.

The news of this great discovery was sent along all the telegraph-wires of the United Kingdom with the rapidity of lightning; the newspapers headed their columns with the name of Hatteras, as with the name of a martyr, and England trembled with pride.



The journey home.

The Desert of Ice.

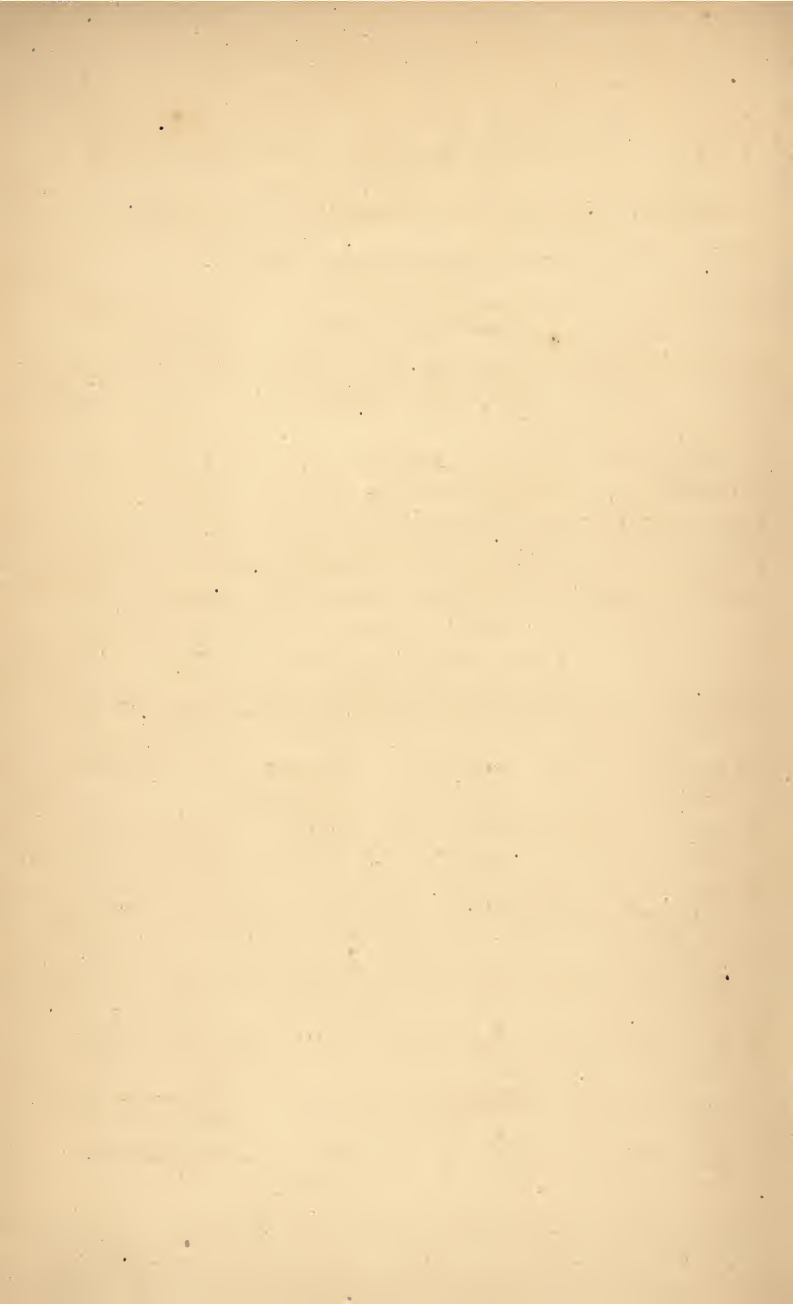


The Doctor and his companions were presented to the Queen by the Lord Chancellor, at a public audience, and fêted by all London besides. The Government confirmed the names of "Queen's Island" to the rock of the North Pole; of "Mount Hatteras" to the volcano, and of "Altamont Harbour" to the port in New America.

Altamont did not leave his companions in misery as in glory—now become his fast friends; he followed the Doctor, Bell, and Johnson to Liverpool, which received them with acclamations on their return after for so long a time, having believed they were dead and buried.

But in his book entitled "The English at the North Pole," the Doctor ascribed all the glory to the man who most of all deserved it. This book, published the following year under the auspices of the Royal Geographical Society, raised John Hatteras to the level of the greatest travellers, and the rival of those adventurous men who sacrifice themselves entirely to the progress of science. All this time this sad victim of a sublime passion was living quietly in an asylum at Star Cottage near Liverpool, where his friend the Doctor had himself placed him. His madness was very quiet, but he said nothing, and understood nothing; his power of speech had left him with his reason. One sole sentiment attached him to the outer world, his fondness for "Duke," which his friends would not take from him. This Polar madness then quietly remained stationary, without showing any particular symptoms, when one day Doctor Clawbonny, who often visited his poor patient, was struck by his walk. For some time Hatteras, followed by "Duke," whose soft and sad eyes were often fixed on him, used to walk every day for several hours, but his walk was always in one direction—in that of a certain alley of Star Cottage. Once having reached the end of the alley the captain invariably returned backwards! If anyone stopped him, he pointed with his finger to a certain spot in the sky. If they tried to force him to turn, he became irritated, and "Duke" would bark with fury for the same reason.

The Doctor attentively observed so strange a mania, and soon understood the reason of it; he guessed why this walk was always in the same direction, and so, to say, under magnetic influence—Captain John Hatteras was always walking northward.



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